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**COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL AFRICAN CINEMA
(A Theoretical and Critical Analysis of Discursive Practices).**

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ABSTRACT.

This study attempts to provide a theoretical framework for the criticism of colonial and post-colonial African cinema. Emphasis is placed on the extent to which the nature of colonial cinematic policies and practices have influenced post-colonial African cinema, especially with regards to forms of subjectivities constructed through cinematic representation.

The study begins by examining some of the methodological problems in the criticism of African cinema. It relates the concept of African cinema to debates dealing with Third Cinema theories, cine-structuralism and psychoanalytic critical theories, and argues that any of these theories can be applied to the criticism of African cinema so long as it is moderated to suit the specific nature of the African condition. It also defines the nature of African cinema by relating it to the notions of national cinema, the question of African personality and identity, emergent genres and film styles, and proposes a general cinematic reading hypothesis, anchored on the concept of subjectivity, for the criticism of African cinema.

With respect to the colonial period, the main argument which I pursue is that two divergent cinematic practices existed side by side in Africa. First, there was a governmental and non-governmental agencies sponsored, non-commercial cinema, which treats the medium as a vehicle for popular instruction. Throughout this study, I refer to this cinematic practice as *colonial African instructional cinema*, and argue that it represents Africans as knowing and knowledgeable people, able and willing to acquire modern methods of social planning and development for the benefit of their communities. Second, there was the commercial cinematic practice which chose, and still chooses, to recycle popular images of people of African descent in the European imagination, as projected through literature, history, anthropological and scientific discourses, etc., in the representation of Africans. I refer to this cinematic practice throughout this study as *colonialist African cinema*. The main argument which I pursue with respect to this practice is that the images of Africans projected in it have a genealogical history stretching as far back in time as the classical era.

In the modern period, the contact between Europe and Africa, and the subsequent slave trade, colonialism and their popular literatures, and the nineteenth century racial theories, are some of the factors which have reinforced the canonical authority of these images. I argue that this cinematic practice represents Africans by employing various metaphors which draw associations between Africans and animals, to suggest African savagery and barbarity, and that by drawing on such associations, they devalue African humanity, legitimise the colonial enterprise and all its attendant cruelties, and absolve Europeans of any moral responsibilities over actions supposedly carried out in the name of spreading civilisation. Though post-colonial African historical texts located in the colonial period respond to the whole colonial enterprise, my argument is that they are inspired, first and foremost, by the desire to refute the images of Africans identifiable with the discursive tradition of colonialist African cinema.

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CHAPTER ONE.

INTRODUCTION.

The cinematic practices of colonial Africa and post-colonial texts located in that period have not been given the serious attention they deserve, compared, for instance, to the literature of the period or post-colonial literary texts situated in the era. In literature, works such as Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow's *The Myth of Africa*, M.M. Mahood's *The Colonial Encounter: A Reading of Six Novels*, Abdul R. JanMohamed's *Manichean Aesthetics*, etc., have given detailed study to colonial and post-colonial literary texts situated within colonial Africa. The lack of detailed study of the equivalent cinematic practices has resulted, when passing remarks are made to it, in generalising arguments that lump uncritically together, the two divergent cinematic practices that emerged in Africa during this period, colonial African instructional cinema and colonialist African cinema. The former is sponsored by governmental and non-governmental agencies while the latter is made for commercial reasons. References to colonial African cinema in studies such as those by Manthia Diawara (1986, 1989), Onyero Mgbejume (1989), Lizbeth Malkmus and Roy Armes (1992), make no distinction with respect to the cinematic practices of the period. Rosaleen Smyth (1979, 1983) who has done a detailed study of instructional cinema in Africa, also makes no distinction between these texts and those of commercial cinema. As a result, historians and critics of African cinema have failed to account for the cinematic practice which inspired post-colonial African historical texts and the tradition of colonialist counter-discourse in African cinema. Such studies also neglect to give a proper definition of African cinema and its nature. Since the term, *African cinema*, is quite problematic, bearing in mind that not everybody on the continent wants to be identified as African nor subscribes to African culture, it is necessary that the scope and limit of the cinematic practice included in such a definition should be properly identified.

The present study is therefore concerned with providing a proper definition and theoretical framework for the criticism of African cinema. The main thrust is to

examine the nature of colonial and post-colonial African cinema, with emphasis on how the cinematic practices of the colonial period and post-colonial texts situated in that era, have constructed African subjectivity and culture, in contrast to European subjectivity and culture in Africa, in the same period. The selection of texts is based on content, that is, the presence of both Africans and Europeans in films set in the colonial period, and easy accessibility.

With respect to colonialist African cinema, only Richard Maynard's *Africa on Film: Myth and Reality* has attempted a study of how Africa and Africans are represented in colonialist cinema. This collection of anthropological and historical essays and film reviews, is however a basic study of very limited scope - it covers a few colonialist African film texts - which does not offer any detailed textual analysis nor explain how colonialist thoughts are articulated in cinema. Besides, most of the assertions made in the book seem to equate cinematic representation with reality. Robert Stam and Louise Spence question the validity of such a methodological approach when they argued that

studies of filmic colonialism and racism tend to focus on certain dimensions of film - social portrayal, plot and character. While posing legitimate questions concerning narrative plausibility and mimetic accuracy, negative stereotypes and positive images, the emphasis on realism has often betrayed an exaggerated faith in the possibilities of verisimilitude in art in general and the cinema in particular, avoiding the fact that films are inevitably constructs, fabrications, representations (Stam and Spence, 1983: 3).

As a result of the problematic involved in approaching the study of colonialist discourse in cinema from the perspective of realism and verisimilitude, I intend to approach this study from the perspective of investigating the organising thoughts and regime of authority, both contextual and intertextual, underlying colonialist African cinema. This choice of approach is informed by the fact that I consider colonialist African cinema as part of a larger discursive tradition within European scholarly and artistic works. I shall be arguing that this practice dates as far back as classical times, though it has become common to locate its roots within the ambit of the slave trade, European nineteenth century racial theories, and colonialism in Africa. The main

argument which I pursue is that the uneven power structure that underlies much of the Afro-European relationship since classical times should be taken into consideration in the analysis of colonialist African discourse and its cinematic practice. In specific terms, I shall examine how these uneven relations of power and knowledge between the two continents have contributed to the constitution of African subjectivity and culture in colonialist African cinema. My analysis of colonialist African cinema is informed by Michel Foucault's argument that there is an underlying relation between power and knowledge in the constitution of any field of study:

we should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (Foucault, 1977: 27).

In my analysis of colonialist African cinema however, I shall be paying particular attention to the visible exteriority of the texts and how they construct both Africans and Europeans, not what lies hidden in them nor in relation to reality. This is in keeping with Said's theoretical injunction that it is the exteriority of the colonialist text that describes. As he puts it:

the things to look at are styles, figure of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, not the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original. The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of truism that if the [Other] could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux* for the poor [Other] (Said, 1978: 21).

In this regard, I intend to investigate how European texts have constructed Africans through the ages in order to place in perspective, the juncture at which the cinema picked up the practice. With respect to post-colonial African cinema, I examine the scope and limitations of works already done in the field, and proposed a theoretical framework, including a general cinematic reading theory based on the concept of subjectivity and its spatio-temporal articulations, for the criticism of African cinema. I also examine both colonial and post-colonial film production structures and

sponsorship policies in Anglophone and Francophone African countries with emphasis on how these policies have affected the output and quality of film production.

I shall be using terms such as *colonialist African discourse*, *colonialist African literature*, and *colonialist African cinema* respectively, to refer to the body of works produced within the tradition of colonialist discourse both before, during, and after colonialism in Africa. This Chapter examines the scope of the thesis, and Chapter Two reviews the literature on African cinema as well as colonialist African discourse. With respect to colonial African cinema, I note the near neglect of the study of these cinematic practices and argue that this has resulted in generalisations that tend to lump uncritically together, the two divergent cinematic practices of the period. To avoid this kind of generalisation, I make the necessary distinctions as well as accounted for the practice which inspired the tradition of colonialist counter-discourse in African cinema. With regards to post-colonial African cinema, I note a tendency favouring the study of the history of the film industry at the expense of textual analysis. When textual analyses are undertaken, the emphasis is on narrative, but since narrative is trans-media, the specificity of the nature of narration within the cinematic medium is not responded to. As a result, such studies are indistinguishable from other forms of narrative based analysis in other media. I also attempt to explain the concept of African cinema in relation to theories of Third Cinema. With respect to the literature on colonialist discourse, I approach its study by examining the various critical perspectives on colonialist African discourse as well as a genealogical study of the roots and scope of the practice.

In Chapter Three, I attempt a definition of African cinema, examine its nature, with emphasis on emerging generic forms as well as examined how issues of African identity and subjectivity, belief-systems and culture, and the problem of tradition versus modernity, are addressed by African filmmakers. This is followed by a proposal for a theoretical framework, including a general cinematic reading theory based on the concept of subjectivity, for the criticism of African cinema. In Chapter Four, I examine the historical context within which the practice of instructional cinema emerged in

colonial Africa. I also examine the various types of films which were produced by the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment, and the cinematic practices later inspired by this project such as those by the Colonial Film Unit (CFU), the Film and Photo Bureau, and the Centre for Catholic Action Cinema (CCAC) of the Belgian Congo. The main argument which I pursue in this chapter is that colonial African instructional cinema instituted a different regime of representation with respect to the construction of African subjectivity and culture, and that it stands in direct contrast to that found in films of colonialist African cinema. In specific terms, I argue that colonial African instructional cinema represents Africa as a developing society and Africans as knowing and knowledgeable people, able and willing to learn modern methods of social organisation and development. I also argue that in this cinematic practice, space and time are not defined by the presence and actions of white characters, with Africans forming the background of action as in colonialist African cinema, but by the presence of Africans involved in the processes of modernisation and social transformation.

In Chapter Five, I examine the historical background of colonialist African cinema by tracing its roots to colonialist African discourse in general and colonialist African literature in particular. I also classify the various types of films which constitute the practice as well as give a general tabulation of its conventions and modes of representation. The main argument which I pursue in this chapter is that colonialist African cinema draws upon various metaphors of savagery and bestiality already canonised in colonialist African discourse in its representation of Africans. These metaphors draw associations between Africans and animals in both the articulations of their physical outlooks and social attitudes. Furthermore, the practice attempts to legitimise European colonialism by setting up Africans and African culture as incapable of generating self-governance, social development, justice and equity. In relation to the general concept of African subjectivity, I argue that colonialist African cinema devalues the humanity of Africans and as such, it should be distinguished from colonial African instructional cinema. Space and time in the genre is defined mostly by the

presence and actions of white characters, with Africans acting as the background against which they play out their adventures, fantasies, fears, and anxieties.

Chapter Six deals with the nature of film production structures and sponsorship policies of both Anglophone and Francophone African countries as well as examined the impact of such policies on production output and quality. I also analyse the impact of both British and French colonial and post-colonial policies on post-colonial film production in Africa. Finally, I respond to some of the generalisations used to explain the relative high output and quality of film production in Francophone Africa, in contrast to those of Anglophone African countries. In Chapter Seven, I examine the historical background to the response of post-colonial African cinema to colonialism and colonialist African discourse/cinema. The main argument which I pursue in this chapter is that though post-colonial African historical texts situated within the colonial period respond to the whole colonial enterprise, they are inspired, first and foremost, by the desire to refute the images of Africa and Africans identifiable with the discursive tradition of colonialist African cinema. In this regard, these texts present an African version of history and historical events which is essentially counter-discursive in nature. With respect to the spatio-temporal orders of the genre, I argue that space and time are democratised in relation to the construction of African and European subjectivities. The representation of European colonial atrocities in Africa is revealed through historically documented actions, with a high measure of historical accuracy, rather than through invented stories or discriminatory spatio-temporal articulations. In Chapter Eight, I undertake a comparative analysis of the narrative strategies of the cinematic practices of the colonial era as well as that of post-colonial African historical texts.

CHAPTER TWO.

LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1. Introduction.

In this chapter, I shall be reviewing the literature on African cinema as well as colonialist African discourse. The main thrust of the chapter is to examine the methodological problems in the criticism of African cinema with emphasis on the scope and limitations of works already done in the field, and with a view to responding to issues of the relation of African cinema to concepts such as Third Cinema theories, national cinema, psychoanalytic and cine-structuralist theories. This shall be followed by a review of the literature on colonialist African discourse with emphasis on critical perspectives and a genealogical study of colonialist African discourse.

2.2. Methodological Problems in the Criticism of African Cinema.

Much of what has been written so far on African cinema has either totally neglected the cinematic practices of colonial Africa and colonialist texts, produced in the post-colonial era and set in the period, or has only made sparing references to it even though African filmmakers, like their literary counterparts, have had to respond to works of the period before turning their attention to post-colonial themes in their works. Lack of detailed study of the cinematic practices of colonial Africa has also resulted, in instances when passing remarks are made to it, in generalising arguments that lump uncritically together, the two divergent cinematic practices that emerged in Africa during this period - i.e. colonial African instructional cinema and colonialist African cinema.

Historians and critics of African cinema, such as Diawara (1986: 62, 1992: 12), Mgbejume (1989: 1-4), Malkmus and Armes (1992: 16-22), have cited the administrative views of the sponsors and practitioners of colonial African instructional cinema, views which were decidedly colonialist, and concluded, often without seeing the films, that the films of colonial African instructional cinema were not different from

those of colonialist African cinema. But in fact, colonial African instructional cinema was essentially a cinema born out of the desire to use the medium as a vehicle for instruction, social mobilisation and community development efforts. In this respect, the way in which African subjectivity and culture are constructed in the films of Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment and similar projects inspired by this pioneer effort, such as those of the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) of the British colonial government, the Film and Photo Bureau, and the Centre for Catholic Action Cinema (CCAC) of the Belgian Congo, is different from that of colonialist African cinema. Basically, in colonial African instructional cinema, Africans are constructed as knowing and knowledgeable people able and eager to learn modern methods of social organisation and development. The main emphasis in these films is on community mass literacy campaigns, health care, education, rural and urban planning and development, transport and communication, etc. Africans form the centre of attraction in these films, and they are usually engaged in the execution of one project or the other, in the process of social transformation. This is in contrast to colonialist African cinema in which Africans are constructed as savage and bestial people always on the verge of slippage into barbarism in the slightest absence of colonial authority.

African film scholarship is also somewhat lopsided in favour of the history of the film industry at the expense of textual analysis. When textual analyses are attempted, the specificity of the medium is often overlooked. The result is that the emphasis on narrative, with little attention paid to the cinematic codes of narration, make such studies appear indistinguishable from literary criticism. For instance, while paying particular attention to characterisation, plot, socio-historical and cultural issues, they often neglect codes of narration as made manifest through character point-of-view, flashbacks, reflections, etc, and the significance of such codes to narrative authority or the concepts of subjectivity, race, ethnicity, and gender.

Historical studies which have been carried out thus far on the film industry in Africa include those by Opubor and Nwuneli (1979), Martin (1982), Gabriel (1983), Boughedir (1987), Bachy (1987), Ekwuazi (1987), Balogun (1987), Mgbejume

(1989), Okome (1990), and Diawara (1992). While these historical studies have been helpful in shedding light on the problems of the film industry in Africa, they have nevertheless overlooked the very specialised nature of the industry - the fact that in addition to being an artistic industry, cinema is also a product of an industrialised economy, and that its organisational infrastructures and personnel are as specialised as any other sector of an industrialised economy.

Though these historical studies emphasise how patterns of colonial and post-colonial state sponsorship and the monopolistic and hegemonic influences of European and American film distribution conglomerates have affected the development of the film industry in Africa, by overlooking both the industrial and artistically specialised nature of cinema, they give one the impression that setting up a film industry is like setting up a factory to produce bricks or toiletries. If it were that easy, then Nigeria, Ghana and Burkina Faso, three West African countries with film laboratories, would have been self-sufficient in film production by now. The fact is that to build a viable film industry, a country requires, in addition to film laboratories, production companies and film studios, distribution companies and exhibition theatres, trained manpower comprising producers, directors, writers, actors and actresses, cinematographers, sound engineers and production recordists, light designers and technicians, editors, production and costume designers, stunts personnel etc; and the industry must be profitable enough to attract the unwavering patronage of both the financial and advertising sub-sectors of the national economy. Such viability in turn requires the patronage of a willing ticket-purchasing cinema audience. Finally, such a country should possess both the geo-political and economic muscle to ensure the international competitiveness of its national film industry (Bordwell and Thompson, 1979: 3-25; Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson, 1985: 243-337).

Thus instead of assessing the problems of the film industry in Africa in terms of the general gross underdevelopment of the continent owing to lack of creative industrial policies, political and economic liberalisation, and progressive visional educational policies, historians and critics of the film industry in Africa find a ready

scapegoat in the erstwhile colonial authorities who, we are made to understand, conspired to let the industry remain underdeveloped (Diawara, 1986). To analyse the film industry in this manner is to fail to see it globally, in both its geo-political and economic terms, as an internationally competitive industry dominated by Hollywood film practice, with European and other national cinemas adopting creative policies for the survival of their national cinemas (Dickinson and Street, 1985; Elsaesser, 1989; Higson, 1989; Dyer and Vincendeau, 1992; Butler, 1992; and Crofts, 1993). Higson particularly foregrounds the political and economic imperatives at play in the construction of national identities through national cinemas when he argues that

to identify a national cinema is first of all to specify a coherence and a unity; it is to proclaim a unique identity and a stable set of meanings. The process of identification is thus invariably a hegemonising, mythologising process, involving both the production and assignation of a particular set of meanings, and attempts to contain, or prevent the potential proliferation of other meanings. At the same time, the concept of a national cinema has almost invariably been mobilised as a strategy of cultural (and economic) resistance; a means of asserting national autonomy in the face of (usually) Hollywood's international domination (Higson, 1989: 37).

From Higson's theorisation of the concept of national cinemas and identity construction, it is clear that the concept is much more complex than most historians and critics of African cinema have conceived it. Stephen Crofts, in his reassessment of the notion of national cinema since the publication of Higson's essay, has tabulated seven categories that operate in terms of an agenda set by Hollywood. According to Crofts:

the political, economic and cultural regimes of different nation-states license some seven varieties of "national cinemas" sequenced in rough order of decreasing familiarity...(1) cinemas which differ from Hollywood, but do not compete directly, by targeting a distinct, specialist market sector; (2) those which differ, do not compete directly *but* do directly *critique* Hollywood; (3) European and Third World entertainment cinemas which struggle with limited or no success; (4) cinemas which ignore Hollywood, an accomplishment managed by few; (5) Anglophone cinemas which try to beat Hollywood at its own game; (6) cinemas which work within a wholly state-controlled and often substantially state-subsidized industry; and, (7) regional or national cinemas whose culture and/or language take their distance from the nation-state which enclose them (Crofts, 1993: 50).

While conceding the overlapping nature of several of the categories with respect to the notion of national cinemas, Crofts however highlights the geo-political, cultural and

economic complexities that underline the concept, and the strategies which individual nations or even ethnic groups or regions within the same nation, have adopted in response to the hegemonic domination of world cinema by Hollywood. What particularly stands out in his article is the fact that every nation, with the exception of the United States of America, is engaged in survival strategies aimed at preserving their national cinemas against the economic and cultural onslaught of Hollywood.

In a situation where both former colonial powers and their erstwhile colonies are engaged in the same fight for the survival or development of their national cinemas, it is naïve to expect that the former colonial powers in Africa would help to develop the film industry in Africa when the reality rather suggests that they need the African market, assuming they can wrestle it from the firm grip of Hollywood, to shore up their national cinemas. What most of the theoreticians and historians of African cinema fail to acknowledge is the fact that pleas for the transfer of industrial technologies, either cinematic or otherwise, from Europe or elsewhere, to Africa are futile exercises. It is like begging a neighbourhood shop owner to assist you in setting up a competing shop on his street. To put an end to the embarrassment of such exercises, governments on the continent should follow the examples of other developing economies by setting up agencies for the funding of independent film producers, protecting and financing their national cinemas through control of film distribution and the building of movie theatres in both urban and rural areas as a matter of government policy, especially in those countries where indigenous business men have shown no interest in developing the cinema sub-sector of the national economy.

In countries where indigenous and/or foreign businessmen and women already own or manage movie theatres, they should be made to include all locally produced films in their programmes, and the films should be shown within a potential time schedule when they are most likely to attract audiences, and the price of tickets should not exceed those charged for foreign films. It is no use entering into contracts with owners of movie theatres only to have locally produced films scheduled solely for exhibition at the inauspicious hour of 11.00 pm. If movie theatres sustain losses from

showing locally produced films, such losses should be deducted from their annual taxes to the state. African countries can only cultivate an audience for locally produced films if the audience has access to such films in the first instance. Finally, African countries should use import duties charged on foreign films to finance "independent" indigenous filmmakers until their economies are industrialised enough for them to enter into industrial film production for the competitive commercial film market.

The only exception to the aforementioned tradition in African film scholarship are auteurist critical studies of African filmmakers in which biographical information outweighs textual analysis, and the latter is restricted to analysis of film narrative, characterisation, plot, socio-history and culture, with little attention paid to the specificity of filmic narration, as in the case of studies by Françoise Pfaff (1984, 1988). Though Malkmus and Armes's recent work is a welcome departure from the usual preoccupation with historical studies of the film industry or auteurist critical studies, it however fails to address, in a systematic manner, the object of study, African film. The deficiencies noticeable in the work can be traced to lack of a well elaborated theoretical framework. For instance, no criteria are given for what qualifies as an African film and the nature of its narrative and production styles. Furthermore, the question of the assumed universal neutrality of the cinematic medium vis-à-vis disputations surrounding such assumptions, and what their implications are for film practice in Africa, is not addressed. Nor is the issue of point-of-view in the cinema as it affects the concepts of subjectivity and identity construction, class, gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, etc, and spectatorial textual positioning, addressed. In addition, as in earlier studies of African cinema, the issue of the cinematic practices of colonial Africa, is not fully explored (Malkmus and Armes, 1992:16-22).

Even though Malkmus and Armes group films such as Alexander Korda's *Sanders of the River* (1935) and Jacques de Baroncelli's *L' Homme du Niger* (1939) under European fictional films set in Africa, and though they reserve a sub-heading for the films of the Colonial Film Units, no distinction is made between *colonialist African cinema*, the category to which Korda and Baroncelli's cited films belong, and *colonial*

African instructional cinema, to which films such as Alexander Shaw's *Men of Africa* (1939) and Terry Bishop's *Daybreak in Udi* (1948) belong.

The themes of community self-help and modern methods of social adaptation exploited in both *Men of Africa* and *Daybreak in Udi*, to cite just these two examples, do not place them in the same category as colonialist African films. Both films are social documentaries in the tradition of Griersonian documentary practice, and the emphasis on stereotypification that one comes across in colonialist African cinema is not the case in these films. For instance, though *Daybreak in Udi* is a dramatised social documentary, the main African characters (the only European character being Chadwick, the District Commissioner) are not the caricatured stereotypes of Africans that one finds in colonialist African cinema. Rather, representation in this film adheres to the tradition of social documentary in which villagers are seen engaged in mass literacy campaigns and self-help community development.

In contrast to the conventions of colonialist African cinema where traditional rulers are represented as arch-rivals and villains to colonial administration, in colonial African instructional cinema, and specifically in both *Men of Africa* and *Daybreak in Udi*, traditional rulers are represented as partners and people capable of social progress. The people themselves are represented as enthusiasts of social advancement once it becomes clear to them that the white man's modern methods of social development are much effective than the traditional ways of doing things. In *Daybreak in Udi* for instance, both men and women, boys and girls, young and old alike, embrace mass literacy campaigns and community self-help development. Though the film is built around the objections of a member of the council of elders to the proposed maternity project, these objections are represented as deriving from fear of social change by a member of the council, and such individualist spoilers are not lacking in contemporary African communities. As depicted in the film, the collective will of the people often neutralises the individualist crusades of such people. Both *Men of Africa* and *Daybreak in Udi* are analysed in detail in chapter four, as case studies of colonial African instructional cinema.

2.3. The Concept and Problems of Third Cinema Theories.

Traditionally, African cinema is categorised under the generalised rubric of Third Cinema. The concept of Third Cinema was first theorised in the 1960s in Latin America though the general idea of revolutionary/Marxist aesthetics which underlies it was prevalent in most Third World countries both as a product of the ongoing liberation struggles for independence in parts of Africa and Asia or as a consequence of the guerilla struggles for the overthrow of Latin American dictators and fascist regimes. The notion of Third Cinema as expounded by the Latin American theorists is also a product of the revolutionary cultural movement in Latin America of the 1950s which climaxed with the Cuban revolution of 1959, and also inspired the pedagogical theories of Paulo Freire and the popular theatre theories of Augusto Boal (Freire, 1970; Boal, 1974).

Though the term, Third Cinema, was coined by the Argentinian filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, in their key theoretical essay, "Towards a Third Cinema", the roots of Third Cinema practice can be traced to factors: the pedagogical work of fellow Argentinian, Fernando Biri, and the Documentary School of Santa Fe which he founded under the influence of Italian neo-realism and Griersonian social documentary practice; the artistic manifestoes of the Brazilian director and main proponent of Cinema Novo, Glauber Rocha, and the revolutionary culture thrown up by the guerilla struggles earlier referred to.

According to Michael Chanan, the Third Cinema movement in Latin America was greatly influenced by Italian neo-realism and John Grierson's idea of the social documentary. Key proponents of the movement such as Biri and the Cubans, Tomas Gutierrez Alea and Julio Garcia Espinosa, studied film in Rome at the Centro Sperimentale, at the beginning of the 1950s and brought back with them to Latin America the ideals and inspirations of Italian neo-realism (Chanan, 1983: 2). Other major sources of influence include the social theories of Frantz Fanon and the literary theories of Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin (Gabriel, 1979: 7-14; Willemen, 1989: 10-12).

In the area of film practice, the movement was launched with works such as Fernando Biri's *Tire die* (Throw me a Dime, 1958); Nelson Pereira dos Santos's *Vidas Secas* (Barren Lives, 1963); Glauber Rocha's *Antonio das Mortes* (The Dragon of Evil Against the Warrior Saint, 1968); and Solanas/Getino's revolutionary film, *La hora de los hornos* (The Hour of the Furnaces, 1968). In theory, it was launched with essays such as Biri's "Cinema and Underdevelopment"; Rocha's "The Aesthetics of Hunger" and "The Aesthetics of Violence"; Solanas/Getino's essay, "Towards a Third Cinema"; Espinosa's "For an Imperfect Cinema"; Jorge Sanjines's "Problems of Form and Content in Revolutionary Cinema" etc. As theorised in the above cited key essays, the concept of Third Cinema implies not only a break with First Cinema aesthetics identified with Hollywood practice and its imitators, but also Second Cinema practice identified with indigenous auteurist cinema.

In all the essays, Third Cinema, is conceived as a tool for creating a revolutionary consciousness for the mass mobilisation of society for social change. The emphasis is both on the decolonisation of Third World societies, the institution of anti-imperialist struggles both in the colonised and metropolitan countries in order to contain imperialist expansion, and the general decolonisation of culture. Solanas/Getino for instance, argue that

the anti-imperialist struggles of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries constitute today the axis of the world revolution. *Third Cinema* is, in our opinion, the cinema that *recognises in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time*, and the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point - in a word, the decolonisation of culture...The culture, including the cinema, of a neocolonised country is just the expression of an overall dependence that generates models and values born from the needs of imperialist expansion (original emphasis) (Solanas/Getino, 1983: 18).

The Latin American theorists and practitioners of Third Cinema considered their works as the artistic arm of the ongoing guerilla struggles to overthrow the fascist and dictatorial regimes of the region. They considered their cinematic practices as guerilla cinema. Solanas/Getino regard their cinematic practice as guerilla cinema and their camera as "the inexhaustible *expropriator of image-weapons*; the projector, *a gun that*

can shoot 24 frames per second " (original emphasis) (ibid:24). They also consider their works as part of the pedagogical crusade to create critical awareness and revolutionary fervour among the masses. In this sense, they saw themselves as artistic vanguard of the revolutionary movement. They also consider revolutionary violence as a necessary appurtenance of the liberation struggle. Glauber Rocha, the key proponent of Cinema Novo, later criticised by the more radical arm of Third Cinema practice, represented by filmmakers like Solanas/Getino and Jorge Sanjines, as not revolutionary enough, argued that

Cinema Novo teaches that the aesthetics of violence are revolutionary rather than primitive. The moment of violence is the moment when the coloniser becomes aware of the existence of the colonised. Only when he is confronted with violence can the coloniser understand, through horror, the strength of the culture he exploits (Rocha, 1983a: 13)

Finally, the Latin American theorists of Third Cinema also place emphasis on the cognitive rather than the emotive aspect of the cinema. They did not necessarily emphasise a cognitive cinema at the expense of pleasure. Julio Garcia Espinosa for instance, compares the cognitive power of art to the power of a game for a child. He argues that "aesthetic pleasure lies in sensing the functionality (without a specific goal) of our intelligence and our own sensitivity" (Espinosa, 1983: 29). Willemen, in his assessment of Third Cinema theories, has observed that filmmakers in Latin America, Asia and Africa, are caught between the contradictions of technologised mass culture and the need to develop a different kind of mass culture, while being denied the financial, technological and institutional support to do so. This dilemma, according to him, explains why the Latin Americans have opted for a cognitive cinema. As he puts it:

since the culture industry has become extremely adept at orchestrating emotionality while deliberately atrophying the desire for understanding and intellectuality, it makes sense for the Latin American avant-gardes to emphasise lucidity and the cognitive aspects of cultural work, thus reversing the hierarchy between the cognitive and the emotive, while of course maintaining the need to involve both of them (Willemen: 13).

Though the Latin American filmmakers often expressed solidarity with ongoing decolonisation and anti-imperialist struggles in Asia and Africa, they nevertheless

emphasised that their theories were born out of their search for an appropriate cinematic practice that would meet the revolutionary needs of Latin America. They even expressed the unique nature of each country's experience. In this regard, their theories were regionally specifically tailored. Similar conditions of underdevelopment, poverty, corruption, and mass illiteracy that stimulated the guerilla struggles in Latin America, also exist in parts of Asia and Africa. However, while the guerilla struggles in Latin America from the 1950s onwards were against independent governments, those in Asia and Africa were in the main decolonisation struggles. What unites most Third World countries then, as now, are the structures of underdevelopment - institutionalised mass poverty, illiteracy, corruption, greed, nepotism, lack of democratic institutions, etc. - and the general technological backwardness of these countries.

The first attempt to analyse systematically Third Cinema as a tricontinental phenomenon, to paraphrase Julianne Burton (1985: 6), was carried out by Teshome Gabriel in his book, *Third Cinema in the Third World: The Aesthetics of Liberation*. Conscious of the range of cinematic forms and influences obtainable in most Third World countries, Gabriel, like the Latin American precursors of Third Cinema theories, emphasised that

Third Cinema is moved by a concern for the fate of the Third man and woman threatened by colonial and neo-colonial wars. In selecting the themes and styles for his or her work, the filmmaker's choice is both ideologically determined and circumscribed...Their major concerns are twofold: (1) a rejection of the propositions and concepts of traditional cinema, namely, those of Hollywood; (2) the need to use film to serve an ideological and revolutionary end (Gabriel, 1979: 1-2).

Gabriel was also fully conscious of the fact that Third Cinema is not unique to the Third World - that much at least is testified to by the title of his book, *Third Cinema in the Third World*. In fact, Solanas/Getino whose works Gabriel makes references to, cite the cinematic practices of Newsreel, a US New Left film group, the *cinegionali* of the Italian student movements, the films made by Joris Ivens and Chris Marker, those made by the *Etats Generaux du Cinéma Française*, and by the British and Japanese

student movements, as belonging to the tradition of Third Cinema (Solanas/Getino, 1983: 17). In recognition of the fact that Third Cinema is not unique to the Third World, Gabriel has equally emphasised the fact that the "principal characteristic of Third Cinema is really not so much where it is made, or even who makes it, but rather, the ideology it espouses and the consciousness it displays" (Gabriel, 1979: 2). He additionally argues that "Third Cinema includes an infinitive variety of subjects and styles, as varied as the lives of the people it portrays" (ibid: 3).

According to Gabriel, point-of-view in Third Cinema does not function on a psychological or mythic level, but rather, takes up an explicit position with respect to an ideological or social topic. Furthermore, that point-of-view in Third Cinema is not a reflection of the consciousness or subjectivity of a single subject, i.e. a protagonist/hero; rather, the central figure in Third Cinema serves to develop an historical perspective on radical social change. Consequently, when the protagonist/hero casts a glance, in actuality, it is the masses or the people who give substance to the gaze. Gabriel therefore posits that the individual hero in Third Cinema is a trans-individual or a collective subject. Based on these arguments, he questions the suitability of applying psychoanalytic and cine-structuralist critical models, governed by the oedipal complex, to the analysis of spectatorial textual positioning and identification processes in Third Cinema. Finally, the aesthetics of Third Cinema moves between two poles: one which demands that the works engage the actual pressing social realities of the day, and the other, that the film achieves its impression of reality, not simply by mirroring it, but by transforming the given situation (Gabriel: 7-8).

In another essay published on the subject titled, "Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films", Gabriel further refines his theory of Third Cinema, this time by paying detailed attention to Third Cinema's modes of narration. He argues that the patterns of viewing situations and spectatorial identification process, are culturally determined. Furthermore, "Third World films are heterogenous, employing narrative and oral discourse, folk music and songs, extended silences and gaps, moving from fictional representation to reality, to fiction - these constitute the creative part that can

challenge the ideological carry-overs that technology imposes" (Gabriel, 1985: 361). He also restated his opposition to the application of psychoanalytic and cine-structuralist critical models in the criticism of Third Cinema of the Third World. He advances several reasons why he thinks it is inappropriate to apply Western critical models in the criticism of Third World films. He gives a comprehensive tabulation of Western and Third World (Folk) conception of art and filmic conventions to back up this point.

Gabriel summarises his arguments by stating that the conception and valuation of art and filmic conventions which emanate from them reflect the world outlook and perceptions of a people, and the position of the individual within the social set up. In his view, the major difference between the Third World and the West, with regards to changing the community from a passive to a dynamic entity, is one of approach - while people in the Third World aim at changing the individual through the community, in the West, the community is changed through the individual. Both approaches, according to him, produce either a communal outlook or an individualist one, and they are in turn reflected through filmic conventions (Gabriel, *ibid.*: 364). With regards to the conception of space and time in Third World and Western films, he states that where Western films manipulate time more than space, Third World films seem to emphasise space over time. The reason for such differences he traces to culture. Third World films grow from folk tradition where communication is a slow-paced phenomenon and time is not rushed but has its own pace. In Western culture on the other hand, a lot of value is placed on time - time is art, time is money and it has to be economised. If time drags in a film, the Western spectator grows bored and impatient, so a means has to be devised to cheat on time. Editing cuts off all that is considered cinematic excess (Gabriel: 365).

According to Gabriel, what is considered cinematic excess in Western cinematic practice, is therefore, precisely, where Third World cinema is located. He argues that some of the cinematic codes which are applied differently in both cinematic traditions include: (1) *the long take*, (2) *cross-cutting*, (3) *the close-up shot*, (4) *the*

panning shot, (5) *the concept of silence*, and (6) *the concept of hero*. Gabriel argues that it is not uncommon in Third World films to see a concentration of *long takes* and repetition of images and scenes; and that in Third World films, the slow, leisurely pacing approximates the viewer's sense of time and rhythm of life. In addition, that the preponderance of *wide-angle shots* of longer duration deal with a viewer's sense of community and of how people fit in nature. He argues that when Michelangelo Antonioni and Jean-Luc Godard use these types of shots, it is to convey an existential separation and isolation from nature and self, rather than the unity of self and nature emphasised in Third World films.

On the use of *cross-cutting* in Third World films, he states that *cross-cutting* between antagonists shows simultaneity of action rather than the building of suspense. Furthermore, that the power of images lies, not in the expectation we develop about the mere juxtapositions or the collision itself, but rather in conveying the reasons for the imminent collision. Thus, whereas conventional cinema has often reduced this to the collision of antagonists, on a scale of positive and negative characters, in Third World films, this mechanism is used to imply ideological collision. Gabriel further argues that *the close-up shot*, a device used in Western cinematic practices to study individual psychology, is less used in Third World films, and that when it is used, it serves more of an informational purpose, than a study in psychological realism. Furthermore, the isolation of an individual, in tight *close-up shots*, seems unnatural to Third World filmmakers because (1) it calls attention to itself; (2) it eliminates social considerations; and (3) it diminishes spatial integrity (Gabriel: 365).

According to Gabriel, there is a preponderance of *panning shots* in Third World films because they help to maintain integrity of space and time, as well as help to minimise the frequent use of "the cut" or editing. The emphasis on space also conveys a different concept of "time", a time which is not strictly linear or chronological but co-exists with it. With regards to the use of *sound* and *the concept of silence*, Gabriel observes that the rich potential for the creative interpretation of *sound* as well as the effective use of its absence is enormous in Third World films. He

cites the case of *Emitai* in which there are English subtitles for drum messages and cock-crows. He argues that silence is an important element of the audio-track of *Emitai*. He refers to the use of silence in this film as, "a cinema of silence that speaks" (ibid.: 367). He however emphasises the point that silences have meaning only in context. And that when they are employed in an extended manner, viewers wonder what will happen, accustomed as they are to the incessant sound and overload of music in conventional cinema. Finally, with regards to *the concept of hero*, he argues that even if a Western viewer cannot help but identify and sympathise with the black labour leader in *They Don't Wear Black Ties*, the lunatic in *Harvest: 3000 Years*, the crazy poet in *The Chronicle of the Years of Ember*, and the militant party member in *Sambizanga*, the films nevertheless kill those characters. He argues that the heroes are killed in these films because wish-fulfilment through identification is not the films' primary objective; rather, it is the importance of collective engagement and action that matters. The individual hero in the Third World context does not make history, he or she only serves historical necessities (Gabriel: 367).

Any critique of Third Cinema theories must take cognisance of the fact that they are historically and culturally products of the age, politics and rhetorics of both decolonisation and anti-imperialist struggles in the Third World, and ultimately of the world socialist movement in general. Historically, the socialist countries were sympathetic to Third World decolonisation struggles and gave military aids to liberation movements in these countries; but the West which was then engaged in cold war politics of containing the spread and influence of communism interpreted such aid in terms of the East's strategy for the spread of communism.

As a result of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe's aid to Third World liberation movements and of the general socialist rhetorics of equality of peoples, races, nations, and ethnicities, and solidarity among the oppressed peoples of the world, Marxist theories and aesthetics proliferated in Third World countries. In fact, Marxist theories and aesthetics, then, offered some sort of liberatory utopia and egalitarian society to which Third World people could aspire at a time when they felt

Western political and economic structures, both in the Third World and in metropolitan countries, excluded them. The historical circumstances within which Third World decolonisation struggles emerged placed them in an awkward situation where the use of decolonisation rhetorics was interpreted in terms of hostility to the West, Western liberal democracy and free enterprise. Third World countries were caught in a situation where they had few choices - to be moderate in such a historical circumstance as the period of decolonisation era, to abstain from using anti-imperialist rhetorics, even if such rhetorics are empty self-consolatory rantings, amounted to being a sell-out to Western exploitation and imperialism; it was to be a collaborator with the West and a traitor to one's community. Caught in these circumstances, Third World decolonisation struggles became casualties of the East-West cold war politics. Third Cinema theories are therefore products of the historical circumstances which implicated them in the world socialist movement, together with its Marxist theories and aesthetics.

A lot of criticism has been made against Third Cinema theories. The foremost of these relate to the inadequacy of the very notion of Third World upon which Third Cinema theories are based. The notion is now perceived to be inadequate as a concept for assessing the level of development that exists in the so-called developing nations, in contrast to the developed nations. Such contrasts between developed and developing nations are now perceived to gloss over a multiplicity of significant differences within and among both developed and developing nations. Every Third World nation is now conceived of as including a First World component, just as every First World nation includes a Third World component. As Robert Stam puts it, the "notion of the 'three worlds' ...not only flattens heterogeneities, masks contradictions, and elide differences, but also obscures similarities. The first-world/third-world struggle takes place not only *between* nations but also *within* nations" (original emphasis) (Stam, 1991: 218).

Apart from the problematic involved in the homogenisation of Third World experience, Third Cinema theories have also been found to neglect the national question. Willemsen for instance, has noted that the effectiveness with which the

national socio-cultural formations determine particular signifying practices, is not addressed. Moreover, the split between a national dominant cinema competing with Hollywood, and a national authorial cinema, which also existed within Hollywood, has also been mirrored in the split between a politically oriented militant cinema opposing mainstream entertainment cinema, and a personal-experimental cinema opposing the literariness of authorial cinema, even if these categories tended to overlap at times (Willemsen: 17). Such complexities are often overlooked in Third Cinema theories.

Stam has also noted that the concept of the national, carries an implicit nationalism which has always oscillated between its progressive and regressive poles, depending on the political character of the power bloc which mobilises nationalism to constitute its own hegemony. He further argues that many early discussions of nationalism often took it as axiomatic that the issue at stake was simply one of expelling the foreign corrupting influence, in order to recover the national culture in all its plenitude and glory. This originary idea of the national is, according to him, simplistic:

(1) it elides the realities of class, camouflaging possible contradictions between different sectors of the third world society, (2) fails to provide criteria for distinguishing exactly what is worth retaining in the national tradition (a sentimental nationalism was always liable to valorize patriarchal social institutions - Sembene mocks such valorization in *Xala* by having his neo-colonized black elite defend polygamy in the name of "l'Africanite!"). (3) Even apart from the question of class, every country is characterized by heteroglossia; nations are at once urban and rural, male and female, elite and non-elite. The nation as a unitary subject inevitably muffles the "polyphony" of social and ethnic voices characteristic of heteroglot culture. (4) The precise nature of the national "essence" to be recuperated, finally, is almost always elusive and chimerical. Some nationalist purists locate this essence in an organic past - e.g., prior to the colonizer's arrival - or in the rural interior of the country, or in a prior stage of development (the pre-industrial, or in a non-European ethnicity. But things are never so simple (Stam: 227).

The above noted criticisms of Third Cinema theories have now broadened the grounds on which the question of representation as it affects issues of nationality, nationalism, ethnicity, class, gender, race, and belief-systems, can be addressed. Coco Fusco has noted that the celebrated Latin American theorists and practitioners of Third Cinema, were male, from the middle and upper class elites of their countries; their sense of oppression was largely global and political, not microsocial or sexual. Their films

became known through auteurist venues, particularly in Europe, in spite of their proclamations that their work was for the oppressed, the masses, or whoever else they designated as their ideal audience (Fusco, 1989: 10). It is not that coming from such class background necessarily made their projects less altruistic, it is just that their theories and cinematic projects, as Fusco noted, often tended to homogenise, even at the regional level, the Latin American experience, thereby overlooking the equally important questions of race, ethnicity, gender, or nationality, that are implicated in their theories and cinematic practices.

Most of the criticisms raised with regards to the Latin American theorists and practitioners of Third Cinema, equally apply to Teshome Gabriel's theorisation of the concept, especially, as it relates to Africa. Gabriel - and incidentally Julianne Burton (1985) in her critical review of his book - often uses the concept interchangeably to represent the totality of Third World film practice. Gabriel, in *Third Cinema in the Third World*, had in fact restricted the definition to the militant political cinema of revolutionary movements or filmmakers in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and its corresponding kindred practices in Western Europe, North America, and Japan, which drew their inspirations from Eastern European nations' concept of a revolutionary political cinema, as the Latin Americans originally conceived the concept of Third Cinema. Such a conception of Third Cinema seemed to be an acknowledgement of the existence of other cinematic practices in the so-called Third World countries: commercial entertainment cinema, often modelled after Hollywood practice, authorial cinema, of which most of Third Cinema practices could be considered revolutionary arm, in spite of their arguments to the contrary, personal-experimental cinema etc. Besides, it is now a generally accepted fact that many of the so-called Third World countries such as India, Brazil, Mexico, or Argentina, are in fact, fairly industrialised nations that have now graduated into industrial film production. According to Stephen Crofts, in 1988, the Indian film industry produced 773 films, 262 films more than Hollywood produced that same year (Crofts, 1993: 56).

As Gabriel later theorised the concept in his essays, "Teaching Third World Cinema" and "Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films", though he does not directly use the term, Third Cinema, the definition and terms of reference applied to Third World Cinema or Third World film practice, seem to imply that he is using the terms interchangeably to represent the same concept (Gabriel, 1979, 1985). However, in another essay on the subject, "Colonialism and 'Law and Order' Criticism", Gabriel reverted to how he originally defined the term in his book, *Third Cinema in the Third World*, by making clear distinctions between Third Cinema, which is just one category of the cinematic practices in Third World countries, and Third World film practice in general. As he puts it:

the discourse strategy of Third Cinema has a more political and ideological social focus. This Julianne Burton seems unable to understand - not all Third World film texts qualify as 'Third Cinema'. The territory is *not* the map. Third Cinema in the Third World is anti-imperialist, militant and confrontational cinema (original emphasis) (Gabriel, 1986: 141).

In most of his writings on Third Cinema or Third World Cinema to date, Gabriel has always objected specifically to the application of cine-structuralist and psychoanalytic critical models to the analysis of Third World films, and by implication, African films. The way he presents his objections, one could even discern a strain in his arguments that carries an objection to the application, generally, of Western critical criteria to Third World film practices; only that such an argument is in itself punctured by the very fact that his theorisation of the concept of Third Cinema, and his "political" or "ideological" criticism is propelled by Marxist critical theory, itself a major grid in Western critical theories (Gabriel, 1979: 5-14, 1985: 361-362). If perhaps his objection is restricted to infer reactionary and conservative Western critical theories, then, he ought to have been more specific. But even such an argument will no less be problematic, because the progressiveness or otherwise of Western critical theories or any other critical theories for that matter, depend not *entirely* on the innate nature of such theories but on *how*, to *what purpose*, and *who* mobilises them as critical canons for textual analysis. As a result, it will be difficult to subscribe to arguments that object

to the application of Western critical theories or other critical theories not derived from Third World countries, to the analysis of Third World films. It is not *which* theories, *where* they are derived or even by *whom*, that ensures the suitability of critical theories as frameworks for textual analysis; it is *how* and for *what purpose*, these critical theories are mobilised, that ensure the progressiveness or regressiveness of them as the case may be. Critical theories are relative terms with relative meanings and applications. Ultimately, all critical theories become theories in *translation* the moment they are mobilised as critical canons for textual, social, and artistic analyses. They become implicated in the personal projects of whoever mobilises them as a framework for analysis. In other words, their progressiveness or regressiveness depends on the manner of their application.

In the case of Gabriel, the only reasons he gives for his objection to the use of the two critical models, cine-structuralist and psychoanalytic models, which he singles out for mention are:

(1) the conception and analysis of film which emerges from cine-structuralist criticism is uniform and static. He does not however state what is uniform and static about it. He also states that cine-structuralism strives to find immanent meaning in works whose deeper meaning is concealed. He therefore argues that since the films he earmarked for study do not try to hide their true meaning, the burden of search implicated in the project of cine-structuralism is irrelevant. But the question is, is there any work that has such an outlook, and if there is, is it impossible to read complex meaning into it? Gabriel, is, in this instance, underestimating the labour of criticism and of the critical faculty. There is no work of art whose meaning is so virtually transparent, as not to warrant the investment of the critical faculty. If there is such a work, it would not qualify as art. Without the labour of reading, of criticism, there would not be meaning in a work of art. Meaning is what we invest in a work of art in the process of reading; it is not immanent nor innate, it is something that evolves, that we create in the process of reading.

(2) Gabriel also argues that a psychoanalytic critical framework, with its mechanism of oedipal complex, is also irrelevant to Third World film criticism because of its underlying nuclear familial model and its emphasis on individualism which he believes stands in contradistinction, to the collective subjectivity and socio-political themes that are emphasised in most Third World films (Gabriel, 1979: 5-14, 1985: 361-362).

Gabriel's objection to the application of cine-structuralist and psychoanalytic critical models to the criticism of Third World films, invokes the ghosts of criticisms that greeted the publication of Sunday Anozie's book, *Structural Models and African Poetics* - a pioneering structuralist study of African literature, art, culinary art - especially Anthony Appiah's critical review of the book and of the whole project of structuralism. Appiah's general argument, part of which I subscribe to, is that though the book was intended as an introduction to a structuralist study of African literature, it does not define some of the key elements of structuralism, such as, the relation between *langue* and *parole*, *sign*, *signifier* and *signified*, and *synchrony* and *diachrony* etc, and the role of linguistics in the promulgation of the structuralist project. As Appiah puts it:

anyone who is even slightly unclear about the role that structuralism, whatever it is, has played in recent literary theory - anyone, that is, who wonders about the directness of the relevance of technical linguistics to literary theory, or about the distinction between *langue* and *parole*, or about the sense in which the nature of the 'signified' is as arbitrary as the nature of the 'signifier' - anyone who wonders about any of these things will find no help in Sunday Anozie's book. Despite the fact that he purports to offer us an introduction to the structure of structuralism, we enter its world *in media res* (Appiah, 1984: 128).

Appiah further argues that the task of Anozie should have first begun - since the work was intended to be an introduction to a structuralist study of African literature - with a definition of structuralism; second, shown how it relates to certain features that he claims to exist in "African thought"; and third, made a case for why we should choose a structuralist approach in our efforts to account for the various semiotic systems of Africa (Appiah: 139). Owing to these methodological problems, the book appears more like a mosaic selective application of structuralist models and key terms to the

analysis of African literature, than an analysis that proceeds from a systematic definition and application of structuralism to African literature. For all his criticisms of Anozie's book, Appiah is not against the application of structuralism or any other Western critical theory to the analysis of African literature. He specifically states that

it is not that a structuralist poetics is inapplicable in Africa because structuralism is European; so far as it is successful in general, it seems to me as applicable to African literary material as any other. But we should not expect the transfer of a method to a new set of texts to lead to exactly the same results ...indeed, this would surely show that there was something wrong with the method (Appiah: 145).

Though Appiah is not against the application of structuralism to African literature, he expresses philosophical and political reservations about the entire project of structuralism and post-structuralism. He observes that, though the fundamental idea of structuralism was to model our understanding of all meaning-bearing cultural systems on linguistics and, in particular, on the kind of linguistics pioneered by Ferdinand de Saussure, it is "by no means clear to many, among whom I happily include myself, what this project entails" (ibid.: 128). In spite of his reservations about the general style of structuralist writers, Appiah moved quickly ahead to state in clear terms what he regards as the four basic theses of Saussure's linguistic theory: (1) the arbitrary nature of the *sign* and its constitutive parts, *signifier* and *signified*; (2) the purely relational, or structural, character of linguistic systems; (3) the importance of the distinctions between *langue* and *parole*; and (4) the importance of the distinctions between *synchronic* and *diachronic* aspects of the linguistic systems.

To return to Teshome Gabriel, unlike Anthony Appiah who set about disagreeing with the project of structuralist poetics, and its application to African literature by Sunday Anozie, after he had systematically analysed it and examined its implications for the criticism of African literature, Gabriel neither analyses cine-structuralism before dismissing it, nor does he fully explain the implications of applying it to African cinema. The same goes for the psychoanalytic study of the cinema. To take the case of cine-structuralism as an instance, Gabriel merely observes that Christian Metz's widely read and analysed book, *Film Language*, attempts to define

film simply (Gabriel, 1979: 5). The fact is, Metz does not simply define film in the book. Rather, Metz's book is a systematic application of structuralism to the cinema.

Even though Metz does not claim to have exhausted all the semiotic potentials of the cinema, his systematic application of the linguistic model to the cinema does help to explicate its structural elements. Metz's structuralist analysis of the cinema is supposed to be a reading hypothesis - like the Marxist reading hypothesis which Gabriel favours in his analysis of Third World films - which anybody interested in *textual analysis* can apply to any set of films. Though Metz's book, *Film Language*, is a complex work, it cannot be reviewed critically by dismissing it the way Gabriel does by saying that it simply defines the cinema, for it is the first systematic application of the structuralist model to the cinema.

With regards to Gabriel's objection to the application of psychoanalytic critical model to African cinema on account of what he considers to be the centrality of the Oedipal Complex and its nuclear familial basis, I should like to state that though the Oedipal Complex is one of the central tropes of the psychoanalytic model, it is certainly not the most important. Current psychoanalytic criticism, derived from Jacques Lacan's re-reading of Freud, recognises the Mirror Phase as the primal scene of identity formation.

With regards to film criticism, Edward Branigan states that the application of psychoanalysis to film criticism, depends on an analogy that compares the processes of the *unconscious* - in a non-reducible manner - to the processes of language, and *vice versa*. An example of the former is the linking of *condensation* and *displacement*, respectively, to *metaphor* and *metonymy*. An example of the latter is the interpretation of the necessary distance between *enunciation* (narration) and *enounced* (narrative). The analysis of enunciation becomes an analysis of Freudian primary processes and the constitution of the subject. With condensation, a compression of two or more ideas occurs, so that a composite figure, image or name, drawing on and leaving out features of both, is formed. In this way, a single image in a *dream*, for instance, is able to represent many different wishes or thoughts through compression of common features

and elimination of (relevant) differences. In the case of displacement, the significant unconscious wish is able to transfer its intensity or meaning to an indifferent term, thereby allowing the latter to act as its delegate so as to disguise it. The insignificant idea is thus able to represent the more significant one without the repressed feature of the significant idea breaching the barriers of censorship. These two processes, which are the governing procedures of the psychical primary processes, function together to create the manifest dream and all other symptoms that so cleverly disguise and express the unconscious wish (Grosz, 1990: 87, Branigan, 1984: 11).

According to Branigan, psychoanalytic study of the film text, as derived from Lacan, begins with the fundamental distinction between *narration* and *narrative*. Both of these aspects of a text are conceived as organised along two axes: (1) a play of presence/ absence between the author as subject and a narrator, i.e., any of the author's representatives in the text - e.g. a character who tells or acts out a story; and (2) a play of identity/difference between the viewer as subject and a narratee, i.e., any of the viewer's representative in the text - e.g., a character who watches or listens. The narrator and narratee need not be personified as characters, but may sometimes be "effaced"; i.e., be represented as implicit positions in the text. The purpose of these games, according to him, is not to move a message (information) between a sender and a receiver (as in a communication model), but to replay the *mise-en-scène* of lack, i.e., castration, desire, demand etc. Thus the self that the individual recognises as his or hers depends, for psychoanalysis, upon what that individual rejects, fails to recognise, or *represses*. The repressed text is therefore the true object of inquiry.

Character is no longer a stable unity (analogous to a human being), but a function in the text which is constantly being split, shifted and reformed elsewhere (just as the human subject is racked by contradictory drives from different conscious and unconscious levels). Character becomes a construction of the text, not *a priori* and autonomous. Character is, in this instance, not a "first fact" for criticism through which the remainder of the text is interpreted and made intelligible; rather, character exists to serve and mask unconscious forces as they are played out in a drama which implicates

the viewer. Thus a character may at one moment be a narrator and at the next a narratee. And as the notion of character becomes more fluid, so too does the boundary between how the film presents a character and what that character presents within the film (Branigan: 11-12).

Like character, Branigan also states that the actions and events of a film are deconstructed by a psychoanalytic reading. For example, the desire to know often appears in the film as a set of enigmas posed, delayed and resolved. The classic text marshals desire and then moves to satisfy them; that is, to reassure the fears accompanying desire (which in turn constructs a replay of desire but only to conceal fear/desire anew). Desire is always a *lack* and so always lacking: the play of desire is a ceaseless lack of satisfaction of desire. The psychoanalytic search for the repressed text also upsets the notion of author. The circulation of desire - often repressed desire - in the text requires two points: self and other or I and you. Surface features of the text - such as character, voice-over narrators and voice-over narratees - are only transient masks for the *desire to know and be known*. The aim of psychoanalysis is not to expose an author who then "expresses" himself through a text but to analyse the network of desire which hold both text and author. Psychoanalysis does not also focus on the responses of real viewers (as they emerge from the movie theatre) nor accept a perfect viewer (perfectly objective and hence invincible), but rather postulates an intermediate, hypothetical viewer, like an intermediate hypothetical author, who is caught up by, and subject to, a system of desire. Thus in psychoanalytic film theory, the viewer as a subject is positioned through its representative in the text (narratee) and through identification with other patterns of marks. Since both author and viewer are on exactly the same level as producers of the text, i.e., by being subjects of its systems, subjectivity is, strictly, neither in the one nor the other but in both and in a necessary simultaneity of self/other. The splitting of the subject is deemed the very ground of intelligibility of both discourse and the human. The split is that of self/other or various inflections of it such as conscious/unconscious, I/ego, ego/id etc. In psychoanalytic studies, it is not the message which is fundamental but the constitution

of the positions "I" and "you" which may not be separate "persons" and which may not be modelled through language. Starting with the text, psychoanalysis aims to reconstruct these various subject positions so as to ultimately reveal the "author as subject" and the "viewer as subject" (Branigan: 13-14).

Rather than the Oedipus Complex which Teshome Gabriel perceives to be the principal trope in psychoanalytic criticism, and therefore invoked to disqualify the application of psychoanalysis to African cinema, on account of what he considers to be its nuclear familial foundation, the Oedipus Complex, though a central trope in psychoanalytic studies, is just one of several. In addition, rather than the Oedipus Complex, the Imaginary Phase is the foundation of (mis)formation of subjectivity. The concept of the split subject that is emphasised in psychoanalysis and represented in the duplicity of discourses, is a product of the Imaginary Phase. The Oedipus Complex, on the other hand, is a product of the mediation of the Symbolic Phase, a phase which institutes the subjection of the child to the laws, norms and values of society. But the individual who is initiated into society through symbolic rituals of sanctions and prohibitions, is already an alienated individual on account of the (mis)formation of the individual that ties its subjectivity to the other. Therefore, if there is an underlying tyranny in the whole project of psychoanalysis, it should be considered the tyranny of the Imaginary Phase and of the Unconscious with its triadic, intractable and insatiable structures of need, demand and desire.

In the manner in which it is currently theorised, human subjectivity seems to be held hostage to both unconscious libidinal and social needs driven by insatiable desires. What worries me is that these *desires* or *drives* are attributed to primal sources and the unconscious rather than the result of the social constitution, history, culture, and conscious/unconscious drives. The psychoanalytic theorisation of the subject as an irretrievably split persona driven by both Unconscious/conscious desires instead of *Conscious/unconscious* ones, is what makes me skeptical of the model. It seems to explain away most human frailties and negative tendencies or symptoms, as products of repressed desires of the unconscious. This makes the model a ready instrument for

the architects of various social excesses or bigotries to rationalise their acts as products of misformed infancy and/or unconscious desires. In addition, the Oedipus Myth/Complex is not a universal phenomenon because of its underlying nuclear familial structure. Such a structure cannot be said to underlie relations within the extended family system in Africa in which there are a constellation of authorities, with familial authority being centripetal rather than centrifugal, and networks of authorities embracing the far reaches of the extended family system. The child in Africa is a child of the extended family, and ultimately, of the community, clan, ethnic group, and society. Within such a structure with networks of surrogate fathers and mothers whose authorities sometimes supercede those of the biological father and mother, the functionality of the Oedipus Myth/Complex, is called into question.

Furthermore, while I subscribe to the notions of the sexed and split subject, I consider both notions as products of social constructs; and in particular, with regards to the sexed, I do not attribute the powers of patriarchy to the fear of castration. Rather, it is a product of the primal division of labour that tended to confine the mother to the home/domestic sphere - especially during the extended period of child birth/upbring - and the father to the public sphere. It was such primal division of labour, especially the labour of child birth/upbring, that instituted the boundary between matriarchal and patriarchal powers, and since the public sphere often moderates social intercourse and discourses, patriarchal power soon gained supremacy over matriarchy. This possibly explains the fact that though most African communities are matriarchal in structure, matriarchy continues to be subordinated to patriarchy as a result of the primal division of labour instituted by the labour of child birth/upbring. Furthermore, though I subscribe to the psychoanalytic notion of the split subject, I consider that splitting to be product of the conflict between Conscious/unconscious social needs and desires. Finally, I consider repressed desires as products of social sanctions and prohibitions rather than of primal miscognition of the Mirror Phase.

In spite of the inadequacies of the psychoanalytic model which I have mentioned, I still think that it can be applied to African cinema after subjecting it to

necessary modifications. Indeed, one of the most insightful critical studies of Ousmane Sembène's *Xala* that I have come across, is Laura Mulvey's psychoanalytic study. In her analysis of the film, she invokes Freudian/Marxist concepts of fetishism to explain commodity fetishism in post-colonial societies, and the historical structural imbalances and gaps which the disavowal value systems of capitalism, especially that of the neo-colonial state, impose on power structures and relations between men/women, elites/working class, urban/rural areas etc. of the post-colonial state. She refers to Sembène's cinematic discourse in this film, as a "kind of poetics of politics", and her analysis is undertaken within a framework of politics of poetics that appropriately translates through moderation, Freudian/Marxist critical concepts before applying them to an African text. Her submission in this regard is instructive:

Sembène suggests that these fetishised objects seal the repression of history and of class and colonial politics under the rhetoric of nationhood. His use of the concept of fetishism is not an exact theoretical working through of the Marxist or Freudian concepts of fetishism, however, his use is *Marxist* and *Freudian*. Furthermore, the interest of the film lies in its inextricable intermeshing of the two (original emphasis) (Mulvey, 1991: 36).

Mulvey's analysis of *Xala* demonstrates the fact that a psychoanalytic critical model can be applied to African cinema. As is the case with other European critical models, what is required of the analyst is a certain amount of sensitivity to the socio-historical world and cultural specificities of the film. In any case, African films, like films in general, contain the codes of their interpretation; and any critic who is sensitive to these should be able to give a fairly insightful reading even if he or she applies a European (or other non-African) critical model. Where the problem lies is when critics begin to use European (or other non-African) cultural norms and values as *standards* - not *comparable* cultural values but *the* standard against which its African counterparts are judged as pathological deviations or corruption of the *ideal*. When this happens, criticism has moved beyond the application of a critical model for discerning the *narrational structures of narratives*, a general textual reading hypothesis, to utilisation of a different set of cultural values as *judgemental* models for appraising those of

Africa. When this happens, African scholars have a right to denounce such criticisms for they are a product of *colonialist mentality*.

Gabriel's comparatist study of European and Third World artistic valuation standards, performance styles, concepts of artist etc., and their filmic representations, tabulated in two tables in his essay, "Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films", is only accurate, in so far as Africa is concerned, if one is dealing with the rural communities - and even there, only to a certain extent. In Africa, for instance, even in rural communities, master artistes such as griots, song composers, choreographers, master drummers etc., are resorting to modern media of mass entertainment and information like radio, television, phonographic records, amplificatory equipment etc., for popularising their art. The drive to acquire modern amplificatory equipment and performance instruments, to acquire wealth, fame and star-status, have further led to the cultivation of individualist consciousness, thereby shattering the communal status of the master artist. The only unique aspect of this development is that during community religion inspired festivals - festivals which are still being celebrated even in major cities in Nigeria, for instance, the Eyo Masquerade festival in Lagos - master artists, in keeping with their sacred obligations to their communities, undertake "free" performances. However, such "free" performances, beside further popularising the master artist and his company, also bring gratifications in the form of spectators' spontaneous monetary show of appreciation to the master artist during the course of performance.

Also during festival periods, wealthy members of the community invite such master artists for private performances during which special songs are dedicated to the ancestry and lineage of the patron who in turn showers the performer with gifts and money. In the end, festival periods also become just another avenue for acquiring fame and wealth. What is still preserved in such performance is a style of presentation - performances are presented in arena-like or semi-arena spaces, with the performer and his company in the middle, and the patron(s) or elders occupying the innermost ring of the seating arrangement, next to the performer. And then, of course, there is the

spontaneous participation. This style of presentation is however unique to traditional performances. Modern African drama, even when it drew its inspirations from traditional festivals, history, myths and legends, was presented in proscenium stages. It was only in the 1970s that directors like Ola Rotimi, Wole Soyinka, Dapo Adelugba etc., began the movement towards restoring arena-like staging styles. Ngugi wa Thiong'O, Micere Mugo, and Ngugi wa Miiri began their innovations with plays such as *The Trials of Dedan Kimathi* and *I Will Marry When I Want* in the 1980s. In the light of the march towards modernisation on the continent, traditional artists are adapting and adopting modern media to popularise their art, and these are in turn transforming their personalities and their art.

With regards to cinematic conventions, as far as Africa is concerned, Gabriel's tabulation is useful also in so far as one is dealing with films set in the rural areas; the category of films which Manthia Diawara refers to as "the return to the source" genre in African cinema. According to Diawara, these films are characterised by the way the filmmakers look at tradition:

it is a look that is intent on positing religion where anthropologists only see idolatry, history where they see primitivism, and humanism where they see savage acts. The films are characterised by *long takes and long shots with natural sounds most of the time. Unlike conventional film language which uses close-ups to dramatize a narrative moment, the close-ups in these films, like most of the narrative devices serve to inscribe the beauty of the character and their tradition.* Pointing to their aesthetic appeal, some film-makers and critics have acclaimed the return to the source movement as the end of "miserabilism" in African cinema, and the beginning of a cinema with perfect images, perfect sound, and perfect editing. Others, on the contrary, have criticized the films for being nostalgic and exotic in their representation of Africa. They argue that the return to source films are influenced by the vision of the European anthropologists that they seem to put into question (Diawara, 1989: 123).

Some of the films which according to Diawara belong to the return to the source genre include, *Wend Kuuni* (Gaston Kabore, 1982), *Yeleen* (Soulaymane Cisse, 1987), *Yaaba* (Idrissa Ouedraogo, 1989), etc (Diawara: 122-126). Though Diawara does not mention it, the films of the folklore genre - what Hyginus Ekwuazi and Onookome Okome, respectively refer to as Folklore Cinema in Nigeria, but I would prefer to call the folklore genre of New Nigerian Cinema - derived largely from Yoruba Travelling Theatre tradition in Nigeria, also use these cinematic conventions. In this regard, films

such as Ola Balogun's *Ajani-Ogun* (1976), *Iya Iminira* (1977), *Oru Mooru* (1982) etc., belong to this category. Gabriel's tabulation, with regards to cinematic conventions, will therefore fit only the return to the source or folklore genre in African cinema. Finally, though he does not state so, it is evident from his theorisation that Gabriel is greatly influenced by the Négritudinist ideas and their cravings for a pure state in African culture and personality, free of European influences and the corrupt advances of modernity. These cravings are usually marked by a certain tendency to theorise African art in general, and African cinema in particular, by situating it in the *imagined* recesses of rural Africa, supposedly the area with its preserved traditional performances untainted by the corrupt influences of modernity.

I have stated on the contrary that such a pure state of traditional performances and master artists do not exist in Africa. The rush for modernisation is transforming the structure, practice, and status of traditional African performances and artists. Though performances are still inspired by oral history, myths and legends, these are presented through modern mass media, of which the cinema is just one example. If the pace of most African films is slow, in comparison to those of Europe and Hollywood, then, it is because filmmakers choose to subject editing to the dictates and rhythms of African social ceremonies and speech rhetorics which demand that elders be heard out. Besides, cinematic conventions or codes of narration, belong to the realm of paradigmatic choices that individual filmmakers face in the process of film directing. They are part of the director's prerogative and as such, critics cannot legislate to directors on the best approach to preserve African cultural values through filmic representation. I personally do not, for one, imagine that African film critics are necessarily more patriotic than African filmmakers.

To round up this section, most of the criticisms that I have made or cited with regards to the theorisation of Third Cinema or Third World Cinema also apply to Roy Armes's, *Third World Film Making and the West*. Even though this study is quite ambitious in the scope of its analysis, it is greatly constrained by the fact that Armes generally treats the culture and narrative forms of Third World countries as

pathological deviations from or imitations of European or Hollywood film practices. Some of the book's inadequacies which Stam has noted, include:

(1) A self-acknowledgely ethnocentric approach to the study of Third World cinema.

(2) The repeated characterisation of technology as Western, an idea which Stam considers flattering to First World narcissism. Stam states that quite "apart from the historical existence of non-European science and technologies (the Egyptian origins of Western science, African agriculture, Chinese gunpowder, and Aztec architecture, irrigation, plumbing, and even brain surgery), Arnes underestimates the interdependence of First and Third Worlds".

(3) In the area of formal structures, Arnes argues that Third World filmmakers depend not only on Western originated technology but also formal structures of narrative derived from the West. Stam notes that this formulation ignores the extent to which some Third World films draw on formal structures not derived from the West; for instance, African films and the influence of oral narrative structures and traditions, Indian films deriving from Hindu legends and Brazilian films building on Amazonian folktales.

(4) Though Arnes pays some attention to the question of national cultures, he continues to employ colonialist and Eurocentric terminologies in his description of these cultures. For instance, he describes Brazil's African derived religions as "primitive" and "semi-pagan", terms which according to Stam, have long been abandoned by even Euro-Brazilians.

(5) Finally, Stam has also noted that Roy Arnes standards for judging a Third World film as international are based on European criteria. Arnes, according to Stam, contrasts "local" films with those achieving a "truly international standards", and merely "regional filmmakers" with "filmmakers of international stature", a dichotomy premised ultimately, on Eurocentric assumption of the "universality" of its own values (Stam: 221-224).

Most of the inadequacies notable in Armes's book, are avoidable mistakes of the types that dogged early European criticism of African literature, but which most European critics of African cinema such as Angela Martin, Françoise Pfaff, Laura Mulvey, Philip Rosen etc., have happily avoided. As I earlier stated, it is not a question of whether it is appropriate or inappropriate to apply European critical models to African cinema, nor is it even one of whether European, or even other non-African critics, can give a fairly insightful reading of African cinema. It is a question of whether the critic, African or non-African, who applies European and other non-African critical models, is prepared to be sensitive to the socio-historical world and cultural specificities of the film.

2.4. Critical Perspectives on Colonialist African Discourse.

In my analysis of colonialist African discourse, I shall be examining how relations of power and knowledge helped to facilitate the constitution of African subjectivity and culture both before, during and after colonial rule in Africa. I am also interested in investigating how the certifying institutions and instruments of power and authority that underly colonialist discourse are masked, thereby making the represented and representation seem unconstrained and natural. The essence of my study shall be to establish the roots of not only colonialist African discourse but also of colonialist African cinema.

One fact that is often neglected in the analysis of colonialist African discourse, is the fact that the so called primitivism and barbarism of the African, was not something that he or she recognised as such; rather, it was something that was impressed upon him or her by the colonialist. In other words, the perceived primitiveness of other peoples or cultures is based on the recognition of the superiority of one's cultural practices. It also entails being in a position to impress such notions of superiority, hence the underlining factors of power and authority. Implicit in the conceptions of colonialist discourse therefore, is the Europeans' awareness of the

historical fact of the authority which they wielded, or still wield, over those whom they colonised.

Colonialist discourse is a complex term which covers the broad spectrum of colonialist representations of those who have been colonised. The range of works grouped under the term cover such disparate fields as anthropology, fine art, literature, autobiography, cinema, theology, government commissioned reports, philosophy, biological sciences, personal adventure accounts etc. Indeed, it covers the whole spectrum of human knowledge. The tenor of views expressed in these works seems to suggest that the inability of the conquered races to defend their territories is a mark of their mental and material inferiority. The speciousness that underly such reasoning is that it seems to disregard the fact that there are historical evidences of intra-racial conquests of people whom one may relatively consider to be at the same level of development. For instance, Napoleon's France once overran large portions of Europe, England overran the Irish, the Welsh and the Scottish, and Hitler's Germany once threatened the rest of the world. In the case of the European experience, would one be correct to argue that the countries which France, England and Germany once overran were made up of inferior Europeans hence it was possible for them to do so? Indeed, would it not be right to argue that those who reason along this line subscribe to the triumphalism of militarism? For these reasons, it seems to me that colonialist discourse is more a practice of rationalisation of the exploitation of conquered peoples rather than anything else.

Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow, argue in their work, *The Myth of Africa*, that they found little reason to distinguish between fictional and non-fictional colonialist works because, as they put it, they were all governed by one tradition:

there was no need to treat fiction and nonfiction separately since both are governed by the same tradition...Fictional and nonfictional treatments of African material differ only in respect to greater or lesser consistency and integration. The fiction is by no means more fanciful than the nonfiction. (Hammond and Jablow, 1977: 44).

In broad terms, the foregoing assertion is correct with respect to the image of African barbarism as projected in, for instance, both literature and anthropology. But one must

not overlook also the ironic qualities of imaginative works which, no matter how much they are constrained by colonialist thought, manage through self-negation, to create openings for native counter-discourses. The main argument presented by Hammond and Jablow, is that colonialist representation, especially that of the British tradition, is a product of ethnocentrism, and that they are projections upon the African continent:

the literature of this popular tradition yields relatively little empirical knowledge about either Africa or the history of the British in Africa. Reality is nearly irrelevant to the tradition. What is relevant, and indeed, integral to it, is ethno-centrism. This means that all perceptions is made through the lenses of one's own system of values and beliefs (Hammond and Jablow: 5).

They argue that an ethnocentric point of view admits only one valid way of life, and that cultures which differ from one's own are perceived as negations of that single set of values rather than expressions that take cognisance of other different sets of systems (Hammond and Jablow: 15). Though this argument is correct, it is inadequate because it neglects the question of the role played by the supervening uneven power and knowledge relations in the construction of otherness. Having said this, the most obvious shortcoming of this work lies in the authors' lack of acknowledgement of the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, in their articulation of colonialist thought.

The same may be said of Edward Saïd's *Orientalism*. Even though the work makes only sparing references to Africa, it is worth analysing because some of the arguments which he makes in regard of Orientalism as a mode of discourse, can be applied to colonialist African discourse. *Orientalism* is a deconstructive study of Euro-American representation of the Orient from classical to modern times. What Saïd call Orientalism is a rather complex mode and methodology of discursive practice that had its roots in Classical Studies, Philology, and Anthropology, but which later branched out to incorporate, as part of its analytical tools, theorisations in Sociology, Political Science, Biological Sciences, Philosophy, and Cultural Studies, on the construction of the Orient. Taking its starting point from the classical era, Saïd undertakes a deconstructive study of authors, nationalities, texts, text-projects, and contexts of discourses. He then analyses them within the overall ambit of the Orientalist fixation of the Orient and of the Orientalist practitioner.

Armed with a combination of the theorisations of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci, Saïd's *Orientalism* can be considered as an archaeological study of the representation of otherness and difference as a discourse of power and authority. Most of the arguments which he makes are directed at explaining why it was possible for European and American writers and scholars to write about the Orient the way they did. The most important reason, which makes me feel that the book is very useful for the analysis of the African situation, is the awareness and constraining authority of the colonial heritage. The area, he argues, had fallen prey to the colonial and imperialist adventures of ancient Greece, Rome, modern France, Britain and the United States of America.

Saïd distinguishes between two types of Orientalist discourse: *latent Orientalism* and *manifest Orientalism*. What he calls latent Orientalism is essentially the hegemonised and institutionalised form of colonialist discourse. He argues that it is the discipline which this institutionalised mode of representation imposes on writers and scholars who work in this field that ensures the fixed construction of the Orient. In this regard, he asserts that whatever disagreements arise among Orientalists, these are matters of individual style and national priorities. This individual or nationally prioritised colouration within Orientalism, is what Saïd refers to as manifest Orientalism. At best then, manifest Orientalism would translate into different approaches and methodologies in colonial administration and discursive practices.

As I noted earlier, one of the shortcomings in the book results from Saïd's failure to make distinctions between fictional and non-fictional works. It was for this reason that Dennis Porter and other scholars criticised the work. Porter's disagreement with Saïd stems from the fact that, not only does Saïd neglect to make distinctions between fictional and non-fictional works, but also does not account for the counter-discursive tradition in Orientalism. In addition, Porter suggests that the work, "presupposes the impossibility of stepping outside of a given discursive formation, by an act of will or consciousness" (Porter, 1985: 180-181).

My own disagreement with the work stems not only from Saïd's lack of distinction between fictional and non-fictional works, but equally from his neglect of the economic factor. In my view, if colonialism entails the hegemonisation of "negative" representation, then, apart from the rationalisation arising from the institutionalisation of field studies of the colonialist category, and the geo-political implications of such studies, there must have been a motivating factor, what I should like to call the "initiating" factor, in the case of colonialist field studies. That initiating factor was, and still is, economic. Saïd's neglect of this factor is most unfortunate because in doing so, his work sinks into the category of over-theorised works, works that tend to undermine the contextual issues that underlie colonialist discourses.

While Saïd's work can be said to have rigorously criticised Orientalist discourse, the same cannot be said for Orientalism. If he had addressed the issue of Orientalism properly, he would have found out that these works, in addition to other projects, were meant to rationalise the Orientalist enterprise. Having argued appropriately in the beginning of the work that to, "say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact," (Saïd, 1978: 39) one assumes that he will nevertheless return to this point later as the work progresses since its avoidance does not preclude the fact that Orientalism rationalised colonial rule in the Orient. As it turns out, he never returns to this argument. In addition, he also fails to link his work up with those of other Third World scholars like Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, etc. For these reasons, the work can be characterised as a formalist study of Orientalist discourse. Its importance therefore, lies in its textual and inter-textual deconstruction of the Orientalist canon. Saïd's latest work, *Culture and Imperialism*, has made up for the above noted shortcomings of *Orientalism* by explicitly acknowledging the distinctions between fictional and non-fictional representations in colonialist discourse as well as linking his work up with the tradition of colonialist counter-discourse.

The first major recent work to address the issue of the African experience in colonialist discourse by a scholar of African descent, apart from Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, is V.Y. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa*. The project of Mudimbe is not too different from that of Saïd, except that his work is dedicated to the African experience in colonialist discourse. Also, in contradistinction to Saïd's literary critical approach, Mudimbe's study proceeds from a philosophical perspective. First, he establishes the epistemological roots of colonialist discourse as the intellectual and spiritual arm of the colonial enterprise. Second, he examines the historical contexts of the emergence of concepts such as "Oral Philosophy", "Ethnophilosophy", "African Philosophy" etc. Finally, he examines the historical context within which African scholars attempted a philosophical reclamation of their history and cultural identity.

Mudimbe's critical analysis of colonialist discourse is based on the theoretical assumption that it is essentially a product of the intellectual rupture of the nineteenth century. He argues that during this period, a major alteration to the order of knowledge occurred. The *episteme* that allowed General Grammar, Natural History, and the Theory of Wealth, was radically altered, and in its place emerged, Economics, Biology, and Philology. The philosophical and scientific works of men like Linnaeus, Blumenbach, Darwin, Gobineau, etc., helped to erect a theoretical framework and classificatory systems, which anthropologists inherited and utilised in the representation of Africans. This is the basic argument that Mudimbe pursues with respect to locating the epistemological roots of what he calls Africanist discourse (Mudimbe, 1988: 24-25).

Mudimbe's theoretical approach does not however account for the roots of works with underlying colonialist thought such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *Othello* and of classical texts such as those of Herodotus, Diodorus of Sicily and Pliny. He himself acknowledges the existence of colonialist rhetorics in the classical texts, what he fails to mention is the initiating authority of the discourse, the fact that they were also products of an imperialist era. At the time the classical scholars wrote their works, much of the African continent, especially North Africa, was under the colonial

authority of the Roman Empire. Beside the colonial presence in North Africa, Roman imperialist influence was also felt at the northern tip of the Sahelian region - in places like Mauritania, Chad, and much of the Lower Nile region. In fact, it can be argued that the imperialist framework that allowed scholars like Herodotus, Diodorus of Sicily and Pliny to travel through parts of Africa as itinerant scholars, also permitted their counterparts from the fifteenth century onwards.

The writings of the classical scholars, as they pertain to alterity, were essentially "anthropological" discourses like those of their latter day counterparts. The epistemological order which informs the practice of colonialist discourse is essentially that of power and authority nourished within the context of domination over dominions, and the end product of such a discursive order, especially in situations where rational reasoning has been sacrificed to jingoism, is a sense of superiority and racist or ethnic bigotry. What has made the Afro-European experience unique is the order of colonialism. The first political structure which produced what Mudimbe refers to as an African *gnosis* for European consumption, was the product of a European power, Ancient Rome. That of the nineteenth century was coincidentally that of European powers again. In addition to these strings of coincidences, one must also add the influence of the concept of blackness in the European imagination. Much of European experience is subtended by Judeo-Christian thought in which black is regarded as the symbolic colour of evil. Satan, the arch-enemy of the Judeo-Christian God, is generally portrayed as black. On the ethical plane, when one is dirty, one is considered black, whether the thought is one of physical dirtiness or moral dirtiness. Of course, blackness does have its positive sides in instances when it is imagined to be the colour of strength as well as athletic ability. Consequently, in locating the sources of colonialist discourse of the African experience, one must not lose sight of these factors which Mudimbe's study overlooked. The point I want to stress however, is that superiority complexes are always manifest whenever one group of people, even within the same race, militarily overwhelms another. Mudimbe's main contribution to the debates on colonialist discourse, lies in placing in a genealogical order, the growth of

Africanist knowledge, and the response of scholars of African descent to it. Also, the lapses which Dennis Porter noted in Saïd's *Orientalism* have been accounted for. Colonialist discourse and counter-discourse was and is still very much, a collaborative work between African and European scholars.

One of the most important debates in the current study of colonialist discourse is that opened by Homi K. Bhabha's re-reading of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. Fanon's work was written in an act of self-liberation, and it is intended essentially to help people of African descent to drop what he calls "the white man's artefact", the inferiority complex, through self-pride and self-consciousness (Fanon, 1967a: 16). It should be recalled that Fanon diagnoses the double-binding nature of racism and racist discourse - what he refers to as the "dual narcissism and the motivations that inspire it", the fact that some whites consider themselves superior to blacks and some blacks want to prove to whites at all costs "the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (ibid.: 12). For the black dilemma, Fanon diagnoses both masculine and feminine categories: the Jean Veneuse and Mayotte Capecia syndromes. He equally diagnoses the Prospero and Miranda complexes as its corresponding white categories.

Although he undertook a psychoanalytic study of the phenomena of superiority and inferiority complexes, he insists that the roots of racism and racist discourse are economic as well as historical. He specifically mentions slavery and colonialism, part of the argument I am also pursuing in this study, and queries the arguments of O. Mannoni who in his book, *Prospero and Caliban*, which Fanon considers gives one the impression that the "inferiority complex was something that antedates colonization" (ibid.: 85, 202). Having placed colonialist discourse in its historical context, and having explained its double-binding nature, the fact that it fixes both the coloniser and the colonised, Fanon makes an impassioned plea for the recognition of the humanity of all races and specifically of the Black race. It is a plea based on the recognition of the equality and sameness of the human races, in terms of their humanity. He also affirms

the right of peoples of African descent to fight for recognition should their humanity be called into question by racial bigots. As he puts it:

if the white man challenges my humanity, I will impose my whole weight as a man on his life and show him I am not that "sho' good eatin'" that he persists in imagining (Fanon: 229).

I have earlier on observed that most of the debates now ranging around Fanon have to do with Bhabha's re-reading of *Black Skin, White Masks*. That reading was intended both as a critical analysis as well as a theoretical elaboration on colonialist discourse. The tenor of Bhabha's arguments is expressed in three leading essays: "The Other Question", "Forward: Remembering Fanon - Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition", and "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse". These essays will be analysed in order to place in perspective Bhabha's main arguments and their implication for studies in colonialist discourse.

The tenor of Bhabha's arguments as expressed in "The Other Question", is that colonialist discourse is dependent on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of other-ness and also, that stereotypification, one of its main discursive strategies, rests on vacillation and consequently ambivalence. As he puts it:

it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalisation; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed (Bhabha, 1983: 18).

His recommendation is that the study of colonial discourse should shift "from the *identification* of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the process of *subjectification* made possible [and plausible] through stereotypical discourse" (ibid). Bhabha is not questioning the regime of stereotype as such, his concern is only with the process of stereotypification and the ambivalent subjecthood that emerges through this agency. I shall return to the implications of such theoretical approaches shortly. Suffice to say for now that this theoretical approach has deep political implications for Africa's drive for modernisation.

In the aforementioned essay, Bhabha questions Saïd's work, *Orientalism*, because he feels Saïd does not elaborate on Foucault's concepts of power and discourse. He argues that Foucault's concepts of power refuse an "epistemology which opposes essence/appearance, ideology/science" (ibid.: 24). Saïd, according to Bhabha, has used this concept by identifying "the *content* of Orientalism as the unconscious repository of fantasy, imaginative writings and essential ideas, and the form of manifest Orientalism as the historically and discursively determined, diachronic aspect" (ibid.). By introducing this concept of binarism, Bhabha believes that the effectiveness of Saïd's argument is sabotaged by what he refers to as the polarities of intentionality. According to Bhabha, subjects are disproportionately placed in opposition or domination through the "symbolic decentering of multiple power-relations which play the role of support as well as target or adversary" (ibid.).

Bhabha equally argues that Saïd's theorisation refuses to see representation as a concept that articulates the historical as well as the fantastic in the production of the political effects of discourse. The function of the stereotype as phobia and fetish, he argues, renders the racial schema incomprehensible to the colonial subject while opening more scenes of desire to the colonialist. As a result of the theoretical inadequacies which he notes in Saïd's work, Bhabha proposes a theoretical approach which argues for the reading of the stereotype in terms of fetishism. He argues that the "myth of historical origination - racial purity, cultural priority - produced in relation to the colonial stereotype functions to 'normalise' the multiple beliefs and split subjects that constitute colonial discourse as consequence of its process of disavowal" (ibid.: 26). He sums up his theorisation by arguing that

the stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (that the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for *representation* of subject in significations of psychic and social relations [Original emphasis] (ibid.: 27).

Even though Bhabha's theorisation may be correct with respect to his analysis of the discursive agency of stereotype, it does not account for the authority of the regime of

discourse. Bhabha's refusal to account for the epistemological roots of colonialist discourse and its regimes of authority, renders his theorisations inadequate as critical tools for the study of colonialist discourse.

Bhabha's reading of Fanon is predicated upon what he perceived to be Fanon's deep insight into the contradictory nature of identity construction as it relates to racist discourse. While conceding that Fanon yearned for the total transformation of men and society, Bhabha insists that Fanon speaks most effectively from the

uncertain interstices of historical change: from the area of ambivalence between race and sexuality; out of an unresolved contradiction between culture and class; from deep within the struggle of psychic representation and social reality (Bhabha, 1986: ix).

In addition, Bhabha argues that Fanon "is not principally posing the question of political oppression as the violation of a human 'essence' " (ibid.: xii), although he concedes that Fanon occasionally lapses into such a lament in his more existential moments. He argues further that in posing the question: "What does the black man want?", Fanon provides an answer which through "privileging the psychic dimension of what we understand by a political demand, transforms the very means by which we recognise and identify its human agency". Furthermore, that it is "one of the original and disturbing qualities of *Black Skin, White Masks* that it rarely historicizes the colonial experience" (ibid.: xiii) and that there is no master narrative or realist perspective that provide a background of social and historical facts against which emerges the problems of collective psyche.

I find the foregoing arguments quite disturbing because not only does it misrepresent the views of Fanon, it does so flagrantly through a de-historicisation of the main pillars of Fanon's arguments. I have noted earlier that one of the reasons why Fanon took issues with Mannoni's book, *Prospero and Caliban*, was to put the facts of the black inferiority complex in their proper historical perspective. But as we can observe from Bhabha's reading of this aspect of the work, he has had to de-historicise Fanon's arguments in order to make him fit into his post-Marxist discourse. I shall

return to this point later when I consider the political implications of Bhabha's reading of Fanon.

Bhabha continues that in "articulating the problem of colonial cultural alienation in the psychoanalytic language of demand and desire, Fanon radically questions the formation of both individual and society and social authority as they come to be developed in discourse of social sovereignty" (ibid.: xiii). He further adds that the representative figure of such a perversion is the image of post-Enlightenment man tethered to, but not confronted by his dark reflection: the shadow of colonised man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, by repeating his actions at a distance, thereby disturbing and dividing the very time of his being.

Based on the foregoing arguments, Bhabha proposes his theory of identity construction by arguing that the process entails that of "metaphoric substitution, an illusion of presence and by that same token a metonym, a sign of its absence and loss" (ibid.: xviii). He further adds that as "a principle of identification, the Other bestows a degree of objectivity but its representation - be it the social process of the Law or the psychic process of the Oedipus - is always ambivalent, disclosing a lack" (ibid.: xviii-xix). And he indicates three instances which recall the ambivalent nature of identity construction. These are: [1] to exist is to be called into being in relation to an Otherness, its look or locus; [2] the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting. It is not the Colonialist Self or the Colonized Other, but the disturbing distance in-between that constitutes the figure of colonial otherness; [3] the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy - it is always the production of an "image" of identity and the transformation of, the subject in assuming that image.

It is instructive to note that even though Bhabha claims to be using Lacanian theories in his identity schema, in order to avoid the intrusion of historical and therefore political imperatives, he has limited his schema to the Mirror Phase of identity construction thereby proposing a construct that is not only devoid of historical intrusion, but also involves interminable re-runs between agent and agency without the

moderation of the stabilising force of the Symbolic Order. In contradistinction to Bhabha, JanMohamed, who also uses Lacanian theories to explain colonialist discourse, places the process of its identity construct in clear historical terms thus:

if every desire is at base a desire to impose oneself on another and to be recognized by the Other, then the colonial situation provides an ideal context for the fulfillment of that fundamental drive. The colonialist's military superiority ensures a complete projection of his self on the Other: exercising his assumed superiority, he destroys without any significant qualms the effectiveness of indigenous economic, social, political, legal, and moral systems and imposes his own versions of these structures on the Other (JanMohamed, 1985: 66).

In addition, he argues that by subjugating the native, the European settler is able to compel the Other's recognition of him and in the process, allow his own identity to become deeply dependent on his position as a master. Thus this enforced recognition from the Other in fact amounts to the European's narcissistic self-recognition. Furthermore, he adds that the gratification that this situation affords is impaired by the European's alienation from his own unconscious desire. In the "imaginary" text, the subject is eclipsed by his fixation on and fetishisation of the Other: the Self becomes a prisoner of the projected image. Even though the native is negated by the projection of the inverted image, his presence as an absence can never be cancelled. For this reason, the colonialist's desire only entraps him in the dualism of the "imaginary" and foments a violent hatred of the native (JanMohamed: 67). The educational facilities of the colonialist liberate the native but in the colonialist's imagination, the native remains just that - a native. Thus like Fanon, JanMohamed also places colonialist discourse in historical perspective.

Bhabha's main point of disagreement with Fanon stems from what he considers as Fanon's attempts to draw "too close a correspondence between the *mise-en-scene* of unconscious fantasy and the phantoms of racist fear and hate that stalk the colonial scene". He argues that Fanon turns "too hastily from the ambivalences of identification to the antagonistic identities of political alienation and cultural discrimination; he is too quick to name the Other, to personalize its presence in the language of colonial racism" (Bhabha, *ibid.*: xix). For his own part, he suggests that the non-dialectical moment of Manicheanism is the answer, and that by following the trajectory of colonial desire, in

the company of that bizarre colonial figure, the tethered shadow, it becomes possible to cross, even to shift the Manichean boundaries, for, as he puts it, where there is no human nature hope can hardly spring eternal.

It is my submission that Bhabha has misread Fanon. In his haste to use him as a theoretical take off point, he strips Fanon of those relevant portions that have made his theorisation stand the test of history. To return to my original point, Fanon believes that Africans, both continental and diasporic, must cure their inferiority complex through the apprehension of the phenomenon on two levels, psychological and historical levels, since historically they influence each other. He equally recognises the fact that the interdependence of both levels of cognition is not automatic, hence he recommended that reality be studied both at the objective level as well as on the subjective level (Fanon, 1967a: 13).

The problem with Bhabha's theoretical approach lies in the fact that, unlike Fanon, he pursues psychoanalytic study entirely on a *textual* level, as if the psyche is a self-constitutory organ. It is true that Fanon diagnosed the double-binding nature of racism and racist discourse, what he refers to as "dual narcissism", but he equally wrote of "the motivations that inspire it" (*ibid.*: 12). Bhabha on his part, ends his theoretical construct at the level of dual narcissism, at the level of ambivalent concourse in colonialist discourse. In the place of the New Man and Woman who emerge through the crucible of liberation struggle, Bhabha elevates a historically backward janus, the mimic subject, that disrupts not only colonial texts but native ones as well.

Bhabha's theory of the mimic-subject is fully developed in his essay, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse". In it, he uses mimicry as a metaphor of sabotage within the authority signified by colonialist discourse. What he refers to as a mimic-subject is an ambivalent personality construct with Anglicised features, never enough to warrant acceptance and incorporation by the English, enough features nonetheless, to allow room for free movement. This mobility, because it transverses both the imaginary and physical boundaries of discourse, signifies the

passage of colonialist authorised sabotage. The mimic-subject, as an invention of colonial authority, is seen by Bhabha, an opinion I equally share, as a product of necessity.

According to Bhabha, the subject emerged on the scene because the English felt the need to produce a class of interpreters between them and the millions whom they governed, a subject who would be "English in taste, in opinions, in morals and intellect - in other words a mimic man" (Bhabha, 1984: 128). Produced through a transferred English Public School system, the mimic-subject, according to Bhabha, is the effect of a flawed colonial mimesis, in which to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English. The mimic-subject therefore represents a problematic within the authority of colonialist discourse: "a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers" (ibid.: 126). The mimic-subject, rather than emerge from the construct as a subservient subject, soon becomes something of an authorised saboteur who helps to fulfil the "civilising" mission of colonialism as well as help to sabotage it by representing it as a cross-breed between mimicry and mockery.

It is on this janus-like personality construct that Bhabha hinges his theory. Furthermore, it is instructive to note that Bhabha's theory of the mimic-subject dwells only on one plank of the disruptive effects of the phenomenon, its effects on the "master" texts. The oppositional plank represented by this presence, that is, the partial presence and absence of the mimic-subject within native customary norms and values, is totally neglected. The fact is that the partial presence and absence of the mimic-subject in colonialist discourse also represents a partial presence and absence in native discourse.

Unlike Bhabha who treats the boundary of discourse as an eternal relay of ambivalence, I consider it a place of inter-cultural enrichment, not one of perpetual fixation. The boundary of discourse is a common ground for the mutual exchange of ideas, not one of eternal misrecognition. In addition, I see discourse as the market-

place for the exchange of ideas, a trader-spot of some sort where ideas are exchanged in an inter-subjective engagement. Every man or woman goes there from a cultural centre - be it family, ethnicity, nation, or even race. The fact that certain opinions are presently dominant as a result of the uneven power and knowledge relations in the world does not mean that there is only one socio-cultural and historical centre. To argue, as Bhabha does, by granting recognition to only one cultural centre, in this instance, the European cultural centre, from which the colonised can define his or her identity, is to engage in authoritarian discourse rather than the multiplicity of discursive traditions which the media avails us daily.

Bhabha's refusal of subjecthood to Blacks and other colonised groups, his reduction of their subjecthood to mimic-subjectry, has been criticised also by Manthia Diawara in his essay, "The Nature of Mother in *Dreaming River*". In it, Diawara demonstrated how difficult it would be to approach the analysis of this film by using Bhabha's theoretical perspective. The problem with Bhabha's theoretical proposition is not just that it takes only a single phase of Fanon's work, the early phase for that matter, as a standard for reading his entire corpus, but that he goes about it in a manner that seeks to foster self-doubt among colonised peoples instead of the liberatory consciousness which Fanon's works propagate (Diawara, 1990b). In his response to Bhabha's reading of Fanon, Neil Lazarus has observed that "Bhabha's Fanon would have been unrecognizable to Fanon himself" (Lazarus, 1993: 89).

The dangers that lie in uncritically appropriating the theoretical propositions of scholars of the Spivak School of Thought, to which Bhabha belongs, have been dwelt upon by Benita Parry. I want to cite her views as a summation of the very reason why I disagree with their theoretical propositions:

the significant differences in the critical practices of Spivak and Bhabha are submerged in a shared programme marked by the exorbitation of discourse and a related incuriosity about the enabling socio-economic political institutions and other forms of social praxis. Furthermore, because their theses admit of no point outside of discourse from which opposition can be engendered, their project is concerned to place incendiary devices within the dominant structures of representation and not to confront these with another knowledge (Parry, 1987: 43).

In order to avoid the kind of textual essentialism which Parry has noted, I shall be analysing colonialist African discourse by situating it within the context of the discipline of the colonialist canon as it exists since classical times; and in modern times, within the context of the slave trade and colonialism. In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall be examining the genealogical roots of colonialist African discourse with a view to establishing the roots of colonialist African cinema.

2.5. The Genealogy of Colonialist African Discourse.

Although scholars like Snowden (1970:169-195) would want us to believe that prior to colonialism, European scholarly and artistic works on Africa were devoid of racist discourse, similar studies carried out by Katharine George on the classical texts suggests that on the contrary, racist discourse is as old as contacts between Africa and Europe. In her studies, George argues that though European accounts of the inhabitants of Africa are in general scattered and brief, they tend consistently to emphasise the strange, the shocking, and the degrading qualities of the peoples and cultures they deal with. According to George,

the classical consensus, then, is that these peoples in the hidden interior and on the farthest shores of Africa not only lack civilization but any worthy ethic of social organisation or conducts as well. The most remote, in addition, are often denied the possession of a truly human form. The dominant attitude in these accounts conceived of civilization - Graeco-Roman civilization in particular - as an essential discipline imposed upon the irregularities of nature ... There was established thus early the pattern of thought which for many future centuries formed a basis for approach to Africa, and which defined them primarily not in terms of what they were and what they had, but in terms of what they presumably were not and had not - in terms, that is, of their inhumanity, their wildness, and their lack of proper law (George, 1958: 64).

George traces the roots of Graeco-Roman racist prejudice to what she refers to as "the ego-flattering naivete of the Aristotelian division of the world's population into Greeks and Barbarians, or freemen by nature and slaves by nature" (ibid.: 62). She further argues that though accounts of the representation of Africans in classical texts are scanty and scattered, they are nevertheless characterised by an attitude of superiority and disapproval, and the substitution of antagonistic fantasy for fact. She cites both

Herodotus and Diodorus to buttress her argument. For instance, Diodorus is quoted to have made the following statements in introducing a discussion about Africans:

the majority of them ... are black in colour and have flat noses and woolly hair. As for their spirit, they are entirely savage and display the nature of a wild beast ... and are as far removed as possible from human kindness to one another and speaking as they do with a shrill voice and cultivating none of the practices of civilized life as these are found among the rest of mankind, they present a striking contrast when considered in the light of our own customs (cited in George: 63).

One only needs to compare the statements of Diodorus and those of sixteenth-century voyagers such as John Lok to fully apprehend the extent to which the classical texts were reproduced through the centuries. Lok, writing in the sixteenth-century refers to Africans as:

a people of beastly living, without a God, lawe, religion, or common wealth ... people whose women are common: for they contract no matrimonie, neither have respect to chastitie. The region called Troglodytica, whose inhabitants dwell in caves and dennes: for these are their houses, and the flesh of serpents their meat, as writhed Plinie, and Diodorus Siculus. They have no speech, but rather a grinning and chattering. There are also people without heads ... having their eyes and mouths in their breasts... (cited in Hammond and Jablow: 20).

This account, from all indications, has been a reproduction of the classical texts, and has been coloured by John Lok so that, as Kabbani puts it in a different context, it can cater to the "needs of sedentary audiences desiring depictions of the extraordinary" (Kabbani, 1986: 3). An analysis of the discursive terminologies applied by Diodorus in the description of Africans affirm George's observations that as early as the classical period, a pattern of thought was already firmly established with regards to the representations of Africans. Not only were the external features of Africans well defined, a classification of the assumably psycho-social qualities of Africans were also included in Diodorus's description. Nor was the practice restricted to Diodorus. According to Mudimbe, the geographic and historical texts of both Herodotus and Pliny reflect the descriptive pattern of Diodorus, patterns which were not dissimilar to those applied by European scholars from the sixteenth-century onwards (Mudimbe, 1988: 70-71).

Though both George and Mudimbe do not fully explore the context within which the classical colonialist discourse emerged, Bernal's study formally foregrounds the role of colonial conquests and counter-conquests to the evolvment of classical civilisation within the Mediterranean region (Bernal, 1987: 189-223). Bernal's study also demonstrates how changes in Afro-European power structures affected the tenor of emergent discourses. The revision and replacement of the Ancient Model of history with the Aryan Model palpably demonstrates the role of power-structures in the promulgation of discourses. Bernal also acknowledges the role of Aristotelian theories in the promulgation of racist discourse. According to him, Aristotle linked "racial superiority" to the right to enslave other peoples, especially those of a "slavish disposition" (ibid.: 202). Similar arguments were later used by European philosophers beginning from the late seventeenth-century onwards to legitimate the enslavement of Africans.

Apart from the existence of a classical canon in colonialist African discourse, one must also add the influence of the widespread Biblical assumptions among Europeans that Africans were the descendants of the cursed Ham of the Genesis story (George: 66-67). According to Cowhig, hostility towards blacks in Renaissance England was a product of this Biblical assumption:

the hostility would be encouraged by the widespread belief in the legend that blacks were descendants of Ham in the Genesis story punished for sexual excess by their blackness. Sexual potency was therefore one of the attributes of the prototype black. Other qualities associated with black people were courage, pride, guilelessness, credulity and easily aroused passions (Cowhig 1985: 1).

The works of English Renaissance writers such as Shakespeare in *Titus Andronicus*, *Othello*, and *The Tempest*, Ben Jonson in *Masque of Blackness*, Thomas Peele in *The Battle of Alcazar*, Thomas Dekker et al, in *Lust's Dominion*, etc., drew upon both canonical authorities and Biblical assumptions. Cowhig's study of the Renaissance theatre shows for instance, that the representation of blacks did not depart very much from the classical texts:

In these ... plays, black people are represented as satanic, sexual creatures, a threat to order and decency, and a danger to white womanhood. They are a loud presence, they rant and they curse their way through the plays with obscene antics and treacherous behaviour (Cowhig: 4).

Even though canonical authorities and Biblical assumptions helped to sustain the growth of colonialist African discourse, the single most important factor in modern history that helped to proliferate it is the Portuguese expedition to the West Coast of Africa and the resultant slave trade in the fifteenth-century. Before the fifteenth-century contact, black Africa's trade with Europe was handled by Arab middlemen. But after the Portuguese conquest of Ceuta in 1415, direct and consistent European contact with Africa beyond the Mediterranean littoral was fully established. According to François Latour da Veiga Pinto and A. Carreira, the earliest navigators to round the coast of Africa were prompted by two economic motives: to discover the source of production of Sudanese gold, which had so far reached Europe via North Africa, and to find the sea route to India and her silk and spice markets (Pinto and Carreira, 1979: 119). In addition to these economic motives, he also acknowledges that the ideals of crusades equally played their part and gave moral and religious backing to the expeditions. Furthermore, when the first sailor-knights rounded the coast of Africa, they also hoped to find the kingdom of the legendary Prester John with the wish to build a common alliance against the Muslim "infidels". It was within this context, that the first set of Africans were kidnapped and sold into slavery in 1444, thereby initiating the mass enslavement of Africans in a proportion never before witnessed in the history of man's enslavement of man, the consequence of which was a proportionate mass devaluation in the value of African lives. Pinto and Carreira state that

the first Negroes to be captured were taken by men convinced that they were doing a great feat - and also a virtuous deed, since everyone of the 'wretches' baptised meant a soul won for God. The technique initially used to acquire the first slaves, *filhamento* or kidnapping, was likewise inherited from the Middle Ages: surprise attacks were made on isolated nomad camps and the captives brought back to Portugal (Pinto and Carreira: 19).

The first set of African slaves were made to provide both the domestic and agricultural labour of Spain, Italy and Portugal. The discovery of the Atlantic islands and later mainland America, was to bring about the rise of the sugar-cane industry and

consequently pave the way for the introduction of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade (Pinto and Carreira: 119-120).

The question of the actual number of Africans lost through the slave trade is still very much problematic. Curtin gives a figure of around nine and a half million Africans, which provoked heated disputations between him and Joseph Inikori in the 1970s (Curtin 1969, Inikori 1976a, Curtin, 1976, Anstey 1976, Inikori 1976b, 1979). In a UNESCO organised conference on the subject, the question of the actual figures of Africans lost through the trade ended unresolved between those whose calculations are based on estimated figures taken only from ships' manifests, as in the case of Curtin (1969), and those whose calculations cover the overall cost of the trade upon Africa (Inikori, 1979). The following summary of the UNESCO conference well illustrates these two opposing camps:

according to some participants who wished to take into consideration factors such as losses during capture and land journeys across Africa, and deaths during the sea crossing, Africa's losses during the four centuries of the Atlantic slave trade must be put at some 210 million human beings ... According to others the overall total of slaves transported between the tenth and nineteenth century from black Africa to the various receiving territories should be put at between 15 and 30 million persons (UNESCO Report, 1979: 211).

Though the number of Africans lost through the slave trade is still unresolved, most scholars agree that the Trans-Atlantic slave trade contributed a lot to the devaluation of African lives (Hammond and Jablow, 1977: 23; Stephan, 1982: xii; Dabydeen, 1985; Brantlinger, 1986: 185). Stephan has argued for instance that as the slave trade grew in proportion,

a black skin was taken as 'natural' outward sign of inward mental and moral inferiority. The association between blackness and inferiority produced by racial slavery was grafted onto an earlier, primarily literary tradition, in which blackness and whiteness comprised the terms of a binary opposition (Stephan: xii).

It was within this context of great devaluation of the lives of Africans that racist theorists emerged in the eighteenth-century onward with disputations over the question of the humanity of Africans. Curtin has argued for instance, that though racism of some variety had existed before in Europe, they need to be kept separate from "the full-blown pseudo-scientific racism which dominated so much of European thought

between the 1840s and the 1940s" (Curtin, 1964: 19). The difference according to him lies in the fact that within the period under consideration, "science, the body of knowledge rationally derived from empirical observation, then supported the proposition that race was one of the principal determinants of attitudes, endowments, capabilities, and inherent tendencies among human beings" (ibid.: 29). From such pseudo-scientific theorisations, race became accepted as the sole determinant of the course of human history. Curtin also argues that as the slave trade progressed, so did Europeans progressively begin to believe that African skin colour, hair texture and facial features were associated in some way with African way of life in Africa and the status of slavery in the Americas:

once this association was made, racial views became unconsciously linked with social views, and with the common assessment of African culture. Culture prejudice thus slid off easily toward color prejudice, and the two were frequently blended in ways that were imprecise at the time - and even harder to separate after the passage of almost two centuries (Curtin: 30).

Curtin equally argues that though travellers' accounts of their visit to Africa contained culturally prejudicial statements, they often condemned individual Africans as bad men. However, as the anti-slave trade movement began to gather strength in England in the 1780's, the African interest began to feel threatened and a different kind of attitude emerged when travellers abstracted from qualities of individuals, and began to talk about the group - not individual men but the collective term, African, began to be referred to as an inhuman savage. Furthermore, the eighteenth-century biologists, who were trying to classify and arrange the whole order of nature in a rational manner, began at this period also to use the empirical data collected by travellers to systematise their classification of the order of nature. The major eighteenth-century classifications of nature began with Karl Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*, first published in 1735 but later revised in 1758. According to Curtin, this work and its successors, formed the basic framework of modern biological classification. This work is structured on the hierarchic order of the "Great Chain of Being" in accordance with the eighteenth-century belief that God had so organised the world that all creation can be classified

and fitted into a hierarchy extending from man down to the smallest creature, whose existence can be discovered only by microscope (Curtin: 37).

Since man was placed at the apex of the chain next to the Creator, eighteenth-century biologists believed the varieties of mankind could also be arranged in a hierarchic order. In his classification, Linnaeus divided *Homo Sapiens* into six varieties with their physical and attitudinal qualities: *ferus* (four footed, mute, hairy); *americanus* (red, choleric, erect), *europaeus* (white, ruddy, muscular); *asiaticus* (yellow, melancholic, inflexible); *afar* (black, phlegmatic, indulgent); *monstruosus* (further subdivided into deviant forms from several regions) (Banton, 1987: 4).

Having classified mankind, eighteenth-century biologists then faced the second problem of the order of the quality of the races of mankind. According to Curtin, since there is no strictly scientific or biological justification for stating that one race is higher than another, the criteria for ranking had to come from non-scientific assumptions. Their assumptions invariably depended upon physical and racio-aesthetic chauvinism. It was also taken for granted that historical achievements in art and science were interconnected with physical form - in short, that race and culture were closely interrelated (Curtin: 38-39). If whiteness of the skin was the mark of the highest race, then, darker races were presumed to be inferior in the increasing order of their darkness. Curtin submits that it was on this basis that Africans were put at the bottom of every classificatory order of the human race. Aesthetic judgements were introduced as well. Blumenbach, who later became a key figure of the monogenetist School of Thought and a champion of Africans, fell into this form of racio-aesthetic categorisation. He described Caucasians as having "in general the kind of appearance which, according to our opinion of symmetry, we consider most handsome and becoming", and Africans in the following manner:

Ethiopian variety. Colour black; hair black and curly, head narrow, compressed at the sides; forehead knotty, uneven, malar bones protuding outwards; eyes very prominent; nose thick, mixed up as it were with the wide jaws; alveolar edge narrow, elongated in front; upper primaries obliquely prominent; lips very puffy; chin retreating. Many are bandy-legged. To this variety belong all the Africans, except those of the North (cited in Curtin: 39).

Blumebach's description of Africans evidently uses European types as a standard for comparison. The major attempt to qualify racial distinction in the eighteenth-century was undertaken by Pieter Camper in Holland. Later generally referred to as "Camper's Facial Angle", it was essentially a measurement of prognathism, derived by looking at a human head in profile. Measurement entails drawing one line from the meeting point of the lips to the most prominent part of the forehead, and another from the opening of the ear to the base of the nose. The crucial angle was formed where these two lines met. Presumably, the wider the angle, the smaller the degree of prognathism, and prognathism was suggestive of the headshape of animals. A wider angle was supposed to indicate a higher forehead, a greater skull capacity, a better aesthetic appearance, and greater intelligence. Camper, according to Curtin, claimed that if this angle were measured for men of various races (or even for animals), the measurements would fall into an ordered series, from Greek statuary as the ideal form, through European races, to Negroes as the lowest human variety, and finally to the lower animals (ibid.: 39-40).

Towards the end of the eighteenth-century, a major bifurcation emerged among racial theorists: there were those like Blumenbach who held to the traditional and orthodox Christian view that God created man, a single pair, at some finite time in the past, the monogenists, and those who held that each race was a separate creation, distinct from the children of Adam, and permanently so, people like Edward Long and later James Hunt - the polygenists. The polygenists were especially influenced by the works of eighteenth-century philosophers who were concerned to find a plausible and systematic explanation of the world outside Biblical orthodoxies. Men like Voltaire and Rousseau suggested that Negroes were naturally inferior to Europeans in their mental ability. Though the majority of European scholarly and scientific discourses in the eighteenth-century continued in the classical tradition by professing the inferiority of Africans, the influence of the anti-slave trade movement helped to polarise both scholarly and literary outputs (ibid.: 52).

While Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* provided all the necessary 'empirical' evidences of the inferiority of Africans as he experienced it in Jamaica, to

support the theorisations of the polygenists, the Reverend James Ramsay countered with a different set of "empirical" evidences in his major work, *Essays on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies*. Ramsay's arguments proceeds from Christian revelation, but he went on to counter the biologists with biological arguments. He attacked the assumption that "the Negro" could be considered a valid abstraction by showing that, even in their physical features, Africans were a diverse lot. Furthermore, the biologists had not really established a definite relationship between physical form and ability, or between ability and climate. On the more detailed anatomical points, he showed that, even if Negro skulls could be proven to stand between those of Europeans and those of apes, there was no evidence the skull shape or size had any relation to intelligence or any other quality. He continued by arguing further that even if it could be shown that the cranial capacity of Negroes was smaller than that of other races, there was still no proof that this characteristic was permanent and proof of mental incapability. He also contradicted Long's assertion that mulattoes were relatively infertile from his own observations in the West Indies. Finally he argued that even if it could be proved that Negroes were a distinct race or even separate species, there was no proof that they were inferior. And if they could be proved to be both distinct and inferior as a group, there was no proof that individual Africans were inferior to individual Europeans. Even if all were inferior, he argued, there was still no moral case for their enslavement. With regard to Ramsay's work, Curtin has observed that he used the critical rationalism associated with science in a way the "scientists" had neglected to do (ibid.: 55-56). The activities of Christian anti-slavery movements - like those of the Wesleyan Christian Sect and the Evangelical wing of the Church of England - and the secular rights-of-man philosophy of the eighteenth-century also boosted the monogenist arguments.

It was within these circumstances that the literary convention of the "noble savage" emerged. The literary African of the cult of the noble savage had some of the characteristics of the biological African of the same period. He was just as much an abstraction, and drawn just as much from the needs of European thought as the

biological African. The noble savage as a literary hero was essentially an abstraction designed to point moral lessons. His exceptional qualities of strength, intellect and virtue, reflected or reinforced the ethical standards of the age. From the later seventeenth-century onward, some heroes were drawn for the purpose of criticising the artificiality of European civilisation.

The first popular African hero of the noble savage convention appeared in English literature with Aphra Behn's novelette, *Oroonoko*. Hammond and Jablow suggest that Shakespeare's *Othello* may have provided the model for the characterisation of Oroonoko. The storyline is woven around the tribulations of Oroonoko, an African prince and his princess, Imoida, who are captured and enslaved. Their tribulations at the hands of brutal white men and their eventual heroic deaths constitute the plot of the tale. It was later dramatised by Thomas Southerne in 1696 and appeared in many other adaptations throughout the eighteenth-century (Hammond and Jablow: 25-26). Oroonoko and his like were later used by the abolitionists as suitable vehicles for anti-slavery propaganda.

Though *Oroonoko* signified the initiation of this character-type, the fully conventionalised noble savage made its entrance only in the second half of the eighteenth-century along with the cult of nature. Furthermore, though the use of the savage hero as a literary device helped to create a much more favourable emotional climate for Africans than they hitherto enjoyed, the practitioners of this literary tradition had no intention of suggesting that Africans were equal to Europeans or that their culture measured to that of Europe. In the same vein, the nobility of the savage hero was not a greater nobility or even equal to that achieved by a European. The literary theme of the noble savage climaxed during the last three decades of the eighteenth-century. Thereafter, its popularity began to witness decline, with only occasional re-appearances throughout the first half of the nineteenth-century.

If the eighteenth-century signalled the emergence of racist biological thought, then, the nineteenth witnessed not only its climax, but also its proliferating influence in all branches of human knowledge. Thus in addition to biological thought,

anthropological and philosophical discourses, geographical, religious, and socio-historical theses of scholars such as Robert Chambers, George Cuvier, James Hunt, William Lawrence, Josiah Nott, Charles White, Arthur de Gobineau, Charles Darwin, James Prichard, etc. continued to propagate the inferiority of Africans throughout the nineteenth-century and well into the twentieth-century.

For instance, Robert Chambers, in his study of the human embryo in 1844, drew the conclusion that before the Caucasian embryo is fully formed, its brain undergoes an embryonic transformation that includes passing the animal, Negroid, Malayan, American, Mongolian stages before becoming a fully developed Caucasian:

our brain ... after completing the animal transformations, it passes through the characters in which it appears in the Negro, Malay, American, and Mongolian nations, and finally is Caucasian (cited in Banton: 25).

The face is also said to partake of these alterations. In short, the essence of his thesis is to prove that "the various races of mankind, are simply representations of particular stages in the development of the highest or Caucasian type" (cited in Banton: 25). George Cuvier's study of *Homo Sapiens* in 1800 did not only place blacks at the bottom of the Great Human Chain, but also states that the lowly status of blacks accounted for their enslavement while the racial superiority of Europeans accounted for their colonisation of the world: "It is not for nothing that the Caucasian race has gained dominion over the world and made the most rapid progress in the sciences", he wrote, while the Negroes were "sunken in slavery and the pleasures of the senses" (cited in Banton: 30). Anthropological studies carried out by William Lawrence in the early part of the nineteenth-century also sought physical ethnographic evidences to prove an inborn racial difference of intellect and moral outlook between Africans and Europeans. According to Lawrence:

the distinction of colour between the white and black races is not more striking than the pre-eminence of the former in moral feelings and in mental endowments. The latter, it is true, exhibit generally a great acuteness of the external senses, which in some instances is heightened by exercise to a degree nearly incredible. Yet they indulge, almost universally, in disgusting debauchery and sensuality, and display gross selfishness, indifference to the pains and pleasures of other, insensibility to beauty of form, order, and harmony, and an almost entire

want of what we comprehend altogether under the expression of elevated sentiments, manly virtues, and moral feelings (cited in Curtin: 232).

In the United States of America, craniological studies carried out first, by Samuel Morton, and later, by Josiah Clark Nott and George Robbins Gliddon, in the nineteenth-century, concluded that whites had the biggest brains, blacks the smallest, and brown people in between. Basing their arguments on craniological measurements, they argued that differences in brain sizes explained differences in capacity for civilisation (Banton: 34-46). In a similar vein, the phrenological theories of the Austrian anatomist, Franz Joseph Gall, were employed by George Combe and William Lawrence, to prove the inferiority of Africans. According to Curtin:

the essence of the phrenological system was the belief that the human mind could be divided into thirty-seven different "faculties", each of which was to be found in a different part of the cortex. For any individual, the strength or weakness of each of these faculties could be discovered by carefully measuring the shape of the skull. Thus character could be analysed merely by external examination of the head (Curtin: 234).

Though phrenology was mistaken on almost every point, Lawrence used it in 1819 to prove that race and culture were interconnected as part of the permanent order of things. (Curtin: 234-235). George Combe, against the better judgement of Gall that the system should not be applied to analyse the character of an entire race, went ahead to apply phrenology in his characterisation of what supposedly was the psychological make-up of Africans. According to Combe, the African's skull showed that

the organs of Philoprogenitiveness and Concentrativeness are largely developed; the former of which produces love of children, and the latter that concentration of mind which is favourable to settled and sedentary employments. The organs of Veneration and Hope are also considerable in size. The greatest deficiencies lie in Conscientiousness, Cautiousness, Ideality, and Reflection (cited in Curtin: 366-367).

Though the emergence of Darwinian theories of the evolution of man, with the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, greatly refined biological thought, it allowed the errors of racist classification to stand. As Stephan puts it,

for Darwin ... it appeared reasonable to think that, just as natural selection produced *Homo Sapiens* from animal forebears, so natural selection was the primary agent responsible for producing civilised races out of barbarity. As a result, Darwin's first general argument about man and evolution, for all its novelty concerning the descent of man from some ape-like

ancestor, did not disturb the assumption in race biology of a great chain of races (Stephan, 1982: 58-59).

Though the racist theories of scholars like Thomas Arnold, Thomas Carlyle, Robert Knox, etc., continued to proliferate and gain respectability during the nineteenth-century, the old divisions of monogenism/polygenism, Ethnological Society/Anthropological Society continued to produce scholarly discourses that reflect the liberal/conservative opposition in Euro-American scholarship.

I want to summarise the points I have been making so far by arguing that both colonialist African literature and the films based upon them, are governed by the existing canon of colonialist African discourse and the uneven power and knowledge relations resulting from modern contact between Europe and Africa and the subsequent slave trade and colonialism. Though Brian Street in his study of the novels of empire overlooks the question of both canonical authority and the contextual influence of colonialist discourse, he nevertheless acknowledges the fact that the value judgements made in the novels of empire are

taken beyond the scope of 'normal' ethnocentrism by their location in a supposedly scientific framework of race, evolution and hierarchy that lends respectability and authority to them. That framework underlies the trivial representations of the 'other' that are found in popular novels and everyday representations alike and gives them a significance and an ability to persist that makes them harder to overcome than simple 'prejudice' (Street, 1985: 102).

Furthermore, I consider it necessary to sketch the genealogical order of colonialist African discourse because it is theoretically inadequate to situate its emergence exclusively within the intellectual ambit of the nineteenth-century as Mudimbe has done.

2.6. Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature on African cinema as well as colonialist African discourse. With respect to colonial Africa, I have argued that the era witnessed the emergence of two divergent cinematic practices: colonial African instructional cinema and colonialist African cinema. The former was sponsored by governmental

and non-governmental agencies, and represents Africans as knowing and knowledgeable people, able and eager to learn modern methods of social planning and development for the benefit of their communities. In contrast to this practice, colonialist African cinema constructs Africans as savage and bestial people living on the verge of relapse into barbarism in the slightest absence of colonial authority. I have also noted that in current works on African cinema, such distinctions are overlooked in appraising colonial African cinema.

With regards to post-colonial African cinema, there is a tendency favouring the study of the history of the film industry at the expense of textual analyses, and that when textual analyses are undertaken, the emphases are on narrative, with little attention paid to the specificity of narration on film. I have also attempted to explain the concept of African cinema in relation to the concepts of Third Cinema theories, cine-structuralism and psychoanalytic critical theories. I have argued that critical concepts can be applied beyond the boundaries of their conception, and that, what is required is a certain amount of sensitivity to the historical and cultural specificities of each region of the world. With reference to the literature on colonialist discourse, I have approached its study by examining the various perspectives on colonialist African discourse as well as a genealogical study of its roots and scope of practice. In my conclusion, I have argued that the roots of colonialist African discourse goes as far back as the classical era, and that in the modern era, factors such as the slave trade, colonialism, and nineteenth century racial theories, helped to codify and justify an already existing canon related to the representation of Africans as inferior beings, in comparison to Europeans.

CHAPTER THREE.

TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF AFRICAN CINEMA.

3.1. Introduction.

In this chapter, I shall attempt a definition of African cinema, examine its nature, with emphasis on emerging generic types, and analyse how issues of African identity and subjecthood, belief-systems and culture, and the problem of tradition versus modernity, are addressed by African filmmakers. Finally, I shall propose a general cinematic reading hypothesis, anchored on the concept of subjectivity, for the criticism of African cinema.

3.2. Definition of African Cinema.

In addressing the central issue of the definition of African cinema, I shall be adopting the theoretical approach of Chinweizu *et al* in which they attempted a definition of African literature by posing questions such as: (1) what is African literature?; (2) by what criteria should African literature be judged?; and (3) what is the proper relationship between this body of works and other national and regional literatures in the world? In answering these questions, they had argued that there are *regional* literatures which include many *national* literatures in different languages, e.g. the American regional literatures which include the literatures of the United States (in English), Canada (in English and French), the Caribbean and South America (in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese) - and *language literatures*, some of which include many national literatures, e.g., (1) British national literature; (2) the national literatures of those countries where an exported English population is in control, e.g., Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand; and (3) the national literatures of those countries where English, though neither indigenous nor the mother-tongue of the politically dominant population or group, has become, as a legacy of colonialism, the official language in countries such as Nigeria, Kenya, India, Malaysia, the Caribbean etc.

They further argue that attempts to annex African literature into European literature, by critics such as Adrian Roscoe and John Povey, on account of the fact that they are written in European languages, is wrong because what determines a regional or national literature are shared values and assumptions, world-outlook and belief-systems, ethos and so on. Although they acknowledge the fact that language does embody, and is a vehicle for expressing cultural values, it is not the crucial generator of those values and cannot *alone* be relied upon to supply literary criteria for assessing those works based on the language. A useful example which they give is that though the national literatures of Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand share English language as the medium of literary expression, this is far less than sufficient grounds to judge them as identical literatures.

With regards to works that qualify to be referred to as African literature, they argue that works produced for African readers, by Africans, and in African languages, whether these works are oral or written, constitute the historically indisputable core of African literature. In addition, works written by Africans in non-African languages, and works written by non-Africans in African languages, would be among those for which some legitimate doubt might be raised about their inclusion or exclusion from the canon of works of African literature. To consider a work as African literature, they argue that such works need to be appraised to determine: (1) the primary reader for whom the work is intended; (2) the cultural and national consciousness expressed in the works, whether through the author's voice or through the characters, and their consciousness, habits, comportment, diction, etc; (3) the nationality of the writer, whether by birth or naturalisation; and (4) the language in which the work is written. According to Chinweizu *et al*, most African literature written in non-African languages, e.g., English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, etc - qualifies as African literature for the first three reasons (Chinweizu *et al*, 1980: 10-16).

Though the concept of Pan-Africanism upon which Chinweizu *et al* based their definition of African literature tends to be homogenising in its suppression of the national question and affiliated issues of class, gender, race, the opposition between

urban and rural areas, traditionalism versus modernity, etc, such a theorisation is not without a foundation. As Abiola Irele puts it elsewhere:

there *is* an African sentiment, an African consciousness, an idea of Africa, and I believe, a common African vision unified not only by history but by a fundamental groundwork of values and cultural life. But there is no African nation; in other words, the felt idea and vision have not yet found an objective political form. What we have is a plurality of African states, multi-national, with a diversity of customs, folkways, and especially of languages (Irele, 1981: 48).

My definition of African cinema is based on this tradition of an *imagined* African nationhood to which most Africans are committed. Like Chinweizu *et al*, I too believe that for a film to qualify as an African film, its primary audience must be African and this must be inscribed in the very conception and textual positioning of the broad range of African subjecthoods, identities and social experiences. Such a conception and projection of African subjecthood and personality is itself an adjunct of the imagined African nation, and its roots can be traced to the very *structures* of shared African belief-systems and world-outlook. The belief in the circle of existence: the world of the living, the unborn, and the ancestral world; the concepts of re-incarnation and predestination, and its socio-cultural correlates such as respect for elders; rites of birth, adolescence, and passage; polygamy and the extended family; community and ethnic solidarity etc. These also are some of the contesting ethos and values that form the basis of the opposition between traditionalism and modernity, the contesting values which the African personality has to negotiate in his or her quest for self-fulfilment and social development. I shall return to this point shortly.

Like Chinweizu *et al*, I too believe that the historically indisputable core of African cinema is made up of films employing indigenous African languages as media of filmic expression. Happily enough, though the first set of African films that followed the release of Ousmane Sembène's *Borom Saret* (1963) continued for a while the tradition of their much older literary counterparts by employing inherited European languages as media of filmic expression, more recently, possibly as a result of the language debates initiated by African scholars of the Obi Wali school of thought in the early sixties, most African filmmakers are currently employing indigenous African

languages as media of filmic expression, with subtitles in the inherited European languages (Wali, 1963, 1964; Wa Thiong'O, 1986). The emphasis on indigenous African languages as media of filmic expression, is not an unnecessary elevation of the role of language in a supposedly predominantly visual medium. Rather, it is a recognition of the importance of language to cinematic discourses since the advent of sound film in the late 1920s.

The issue of language to the definition of African cinema is also important because James Potts's arguments in respect of the photographic qualities of the filmic medium and its discursive implications, re-echo some of the initial problems of definition of African literature earlier referred to, e.g., the Roscoe and Povey arguments that sought to integrate African literature into European literature by virtue of the fact that they are written in European languages. A similar argument is implicit in Potts's essay, "Is there an International Film Language?", which, equates the photographic qualities of the filmic medium with its signifiatory range and capacities - a literal equation of the medium with the message. Since he also argues that the medium is a Western invention, on the basis of technological determinism, he assumes that there is an international film language and style but that it is Western.

The beginning of Potts's essay actually suggests that his arguments are geared towards implying that the technology of the medium may not necessarily equal the message but the discursive use to which it is put, when he argues that

it seems unlikely that the use of an Arriflex camera automatically imposes a Teutonic film style, that an Eclair gives Gallic flair, or that by toting a Japanese Super 8 mm. camera with a power zoom one starts perceiving the world through the eyes of an Oriental (however 'Westernised'). But it is becoming generally accepted that technology is not value-free: to some extent different technologies dictate the way in which we see the world, the way we record and interpret 'reality', and they influence the types of codes we use to communicate a message. But technologies, whatever their source, seem to interact with the culture into which they are transferred; in some instances they are modified and new methods of using old technologies may be attributed to experimentation based on specific localised cultural needs not foreseen by the manufacturers of the equipment (Potts, 1979: 74).

However, a little further in the essay, he reverses this argument by equating the medium and its narrative or signifiatory range and capacities with camera technology.

He specifically states that "I would argue that it is more to do with technology than anything else. Given a Box Brownie or an Instamatic camera with a pretty basic standard lens, the tendency is to take medium-shots (or medium long shot). Then one is sure of focus and depth of field" (Potts: 79). He uses this same argument to explain the emergence of new cinematic forms in Europe and North America. As he puts it: "The development of the Eclair camera resulted in a new French filmic dialect which quickly spread around the world. Independent but parallel developments in North America also contributed to the rapid 'internationalisation' of *cinéma vérité* and 'direct cinema' technique" (ibid.:80). By placing emphasis on technological determinism, Potts virtually overlooks both the historical and anthropological roots of these technological developments that preceded the discursive uses to which they were put. In other respects, he also overlooks the discursive aspect of the filmic medium which Annette Kuhn uses in her essay to argue against exclusive technological deterministic theories of the cinema. According to Kuhn,

that 16mm. portable synch-sound equipment facilitates production is not in question; it becomes possible, for example, to undertake location shooting in natural light with fast film; to follow the spontaneous movements of subjects in the film; to film relatively unobtrusively with a two-person, or even one-person, crew; to record unscripted sounds and speech. But to suggest that technology is determining is a different argument altogether: to pose the question this way is to suggest that technology itself is outside of determination. It is, however, quite possible to reserve the terms of assertion and to give good grounds for doing so - in other words, to argue, in the particular instance of documentary film, that certain types of equipment were developed and marketed expressly to make a specific type of film-making possible and that therefore the technological developments were themselves not innocent of historical/ideological overdetermination (Kuhn, 1978: 75).

In contradistinction to Kuhn who places emphasis on the discursive aspect of film, Potts's arguments exclusively equates the narrative and signifiatory range and capacities of the filmic medium with camera technology, a technological deterministic theorisation which he also extends to the interpretation of Metz's reference to film as a kind of visual Esperanto. Metz uses the term to compare the double articulation and social conventions that underly the understanding and competence in linguistic systems, to the virtual, visual iconographic quality of film, which, requiring no such double articulation, makes it translatable into all languages. Potts assumes this analogy

to mean that Metz equates the iconographic quality of the medium with its signifiatory range (Metz, 1974: 63-64). But even if one were to accept Potts's literal interpretation of Metz's analogy to mean that Metz was equating the iconographic quality of the filmic medium to its discursive range, which is hardly what he meant, one could still question Potts's rationale for accepting this theorisation at face value. Moreover, Metz's emphasis on the image track in his theorisation of narrative cinema has been questioned by Bill Nichols who suggests that the stress on the image track should be modified slightly and replaced by sound/image relationships (Nichols, 1976/77: 39-40).

In what would seem to be another contradictory vein to his earlier literal interpretation of Metz, Potts had argued that

film-making can be thought of as a form of universal speech, linking all individuals and communities, setting up its own average in terms of understanding and interpretation: but we know that the same signs are not united with the same concepts - rather the signs which are apparently the same are often associated with different concepts in different cultures. Sometimes seeing a film or tv programme can be like hearing people speak a language we do not know (Potts: 81).

Ordinarily, this argument seems reasonable enough as it takes into consideration the fact that filmic visual Esperanto is different from filmic discursive visual Esperanto. The latter reference of the term suggests both linkage to and representation of social discourses whose entire range of codes are culture specific, with limited cognitive accessibility to those outside the range of the represented culture. Of course most films contain codes of their own interpretations but such codes can either be accepted as comparative values for inter-cultural analysis - in which case there will be no problem since internal codes within the text will assist the analyst to give insightful reading - or they could be queried on the basis of one's cultural values, in which case, one not only denies the existence of cultures beside one's own but could also be charged with making wrong critical judgements based on non-cognitive accessibility to the represented culture or both. Besides, there is now a general acknowledgement of the fact that Third World filmmakers are adopting into the cinematic medium, oral

narrative structures and styles that are quantifiably differentiating their filmic narrative style from mainstream classical Hollywood narrative model (Chanan, 1983; Diawara, 1988; Stam, 1991 etc). However, it would seem that in spite of his arguments, Potts's Eurocentric interpretation of style admits no room for plurality of styles in cinematic practices. He argues, for instance, that "On the whole, I am skeptical about 'schools' as I am about the structural or formal elements in a film which are national or even ethnic (in the sense that one is tempted to talk about them as specifically African, Japanese or Indian" (Potts: 79).

Though Potts states that he does not recognise the existence of regional styles, with regards to the question of queries which the Chinese raised in respect of the aesthetic preferences of Michelangelo Antonioni's documentary on China, he argues that "quite apart from the question of the film's content, it is clear that the Chinese are unfamiliar with the conventions and cinematic language of 'Western', neo-realistic, social documentary. Antonioni's 'tricks' are standard practice by our norms" (ibid.: 79). By this sheer double standard and Eurocentric definition of style, Potts implicitly equates style with camera technology. Since he also observes that the camera is a Western invention, his arguments can by extension, be interpreted to imply that since the camera is a Western invention, universal cinematic style *ipso facto* is Western. In this regard, Potts refuses to contemplate the idea of the existence of a black or Pan-African (film) aesthetics. In other words, since Africans did not invent the camera, they could not possibly tell their own stories with it nor could there exist, by extension of such act, an African film aesthetics. As he puts it:

even Paulin Vieyra, film-maker and author of a number of books on African cinema (including a study of Sembène Ousmane), makes this misleading generalisation: 'The African sensitivity is entirely different from the European or American sensitivity. We have a view of things that is completely different from that of the West. Each person see things according to his own background and culture. The world in which the African film-maker lives gives him a vision of Africa which is not exotic, not foreign, but uniquely 'African' in cultural content' (Potts: 81).

As I earlier observed, Potts's general argument in this essay re-echoes that of Adrian Roscoe and John Povey, who sought to integrate African literature into European

literature - albeit on a lower level - on account of the fact that African writers employ inherited European languages as medium of literary expression. Potts's own version of the argument is implicitly proposed in this format: camera technology equals the signifiatory range of the cinematic apparatus, cinematic narration and style. Since the camera is a Western invention, style is Western. By extension, since Africans did not invent the camera, there cannot exist an African film aesthetics, and by implication also African cinema. I should like to argue that style defined in this manner would mean not only an equation of style exclusively with technology and medium, but also suggest an exclusive separation of the formal structures of a text from its content, or narration from narrative. At the level of style, such an equation would be wrong; and in theories of narration/narratives, such distinctions between formal structures and content, between narration and narrative, are made at the theoretical level, to explain the formal structures of narratives, and to reveal the discursive levels of the text which narrative transparency suppresses. They are never meant to be exclusive separations as such.

Though African film style does not operate the type of rigid structures and strategies for narrative coherence and clarity which David Bordwell identifies with the classical Hollywood style, a style derived from historical forms such as the well-made play, popular romance, and late nineteenth century short story, African film style is now generally acknowledged to derive its narrative forms and structures from traditional African oral narrative practice, especially that of professional griots (Cham, 1982; Diawara, 1988a). The structure of oral narrative have been studied in detail by African scholars such as J.P. Clark-Bekederemo (1977), Isidore Okpewho (1979), Chinweizu *et al* (1980) etc. These studies have unearthed the wealth and complexities of traditional African oral narratives - the fact that transcribed oral narratives vary in length; contain various genres, from moralistic tales and fables, to epics, horror tales, phantasies etc. These studies have further revealed that African oral narratives contain both linear and episodic plots, with plot structures incorporating embellishments such as narrative digressions, parallelisms, flashbacks, dream sequences; and that characterisations are elaborate, well developed, with both human types and

anthropomorphic types; that language is extremely figurative, with performances incorporating song, music, dance, etc. (Okpewho, 1979: 135-201; Chinweizu *et al*: 22-146; Diawara, 1992: 11).

With regards to the cinema, both Diawara (1988) and Cham (1982) have revealed through their studies how oral narrative structures and performance elements such as songs, music, dance etc., are employed by African filmmakers as authentic indices of African cultural practices, and also as masks for revealing aspects of contemporary African politics and social practices. Diawara, for instance, has observed that in oral narratives, the principles of narrative action, causality, and narrative progression, are based on the subversion of a stable moral order by a negative element and/or vainglorious persona, which are contained or neutralised at the end of the narrative. In African cinema, on the other hand, some of these elements or traditional narrative principles are violated through inversion (Diawara: 12). Thus whereas in oral tradition, the griots, being generally conservative and concerned with maintenance of traditional values, always closed their narratives through restoration of social order, in African cinema, the end of most narratives are much more ambiguous and open to several interpretations. Though the griots often manipulated narrative point-of-view in their stories to coincide with the point-of-view of the central character with whom we are compelled to empathise, point-of-view in African cinema is much more diffused; character point-of-view, for instance, may not necessarily coincide with narrative point-of-view, and central characters such as El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye, in Ousmane Sembène's *Xala*, are not necessarily set up to invoke our empathy, rather, they are set up as object of moral lessons.

Diawara also observes that while Western directors often achieve recognition by letting their stories tell themselves through various delegated narrative devices, the African director, like the griot, masters his craft by impressing the spectator with his or her narrative performance. Though the basic narrative format in instances of dialogue between characters, is shot/reverse-shot, spatial representation is strongly marked according to gender lines. As he puts it: "The external space in Africa is less

characterized by the display of emotion and closeness between man and woman, and more by a designation of man's space and woman's space in society" (Diawara: 12-13).

African film style is still in the process of being codified and certainly contains aspects that need further clarifications. For instance, there is the need to define the status of shot composition, camera movement, placement, and duration, and the general spatio-temporal order of representation for films of the folkloric or return to the source genre, mostly set in rural areas, as opposed to films set within urban milieux where the pace of life is relatively faster. However, there is no doubt that African oral narrative tradition, is the major influence upon the emergent style. This is not to say that African cinema is isolative and not influenced by Hollywood (and other) cinematic styles, but to question the basis of Potts's argument that there is no African film style but a universal film style which is Western.

To return once more to the question of definition of African cinema, I also believe like Chinweizu *et al*, that for a film to qualify as African, the filmmaker must be an African by birth or naturalisation, and the film must be based on African social experience. I do not by this qualification imply that there is a unified perspective to African social experience nor a unified approach to representing it. For instance, the concept of African personality, which is a sub-category within the Pan-Africanist project, recognises the multi-racial make-up of Africa, but it is also a recognition that carries with it, significant historical implications for black Africans. As Abiola Irele puts it elsewhere:

ideological development in Africa, either in the form of Négritude or under its English designation, 'African personality', has been largely a strategy with which to confront the contingencies of history. It had the primary objective of awakening the African consciousness so as to render us apt for action...But if African thought has been largely a transposition to the intellectual plane of the responses to the colonial situation, it is also inscribed within a broader perspective which brings out the implications of the encounter with Europe in the very fact that we, as Africans, have become conscious of ourselves as a distinct category of men, with a responsibility to other men, it is true, but with a commitment to our particular destiny as a people (Irele, 1981: 112-113).

The definition of African personality, together with its underlying structures of belief-systems, world-outlook, ethos, and social practices, has therefore always been

restricted to black Africans. However, the Pan-Africanist project, of which African personality is just a sub-category, has always, above all else, been a secular social vision of African unity. In this regard, it incorporates both North Africans who subscribe more to Arab culture than black Africa's, and European-Africans who subscribe more to European culture than black Africa's. Therefore, when I insist that for a film to qualify as an African film, the filmmaker must be an African either by birth or naturalisation, and that it should be based on African social experience, it should be taken for granted that the term, African cinema acknowledges the multiplicity of social experiences implicated in the term.

Even within black Africa itself, there is no unified social experience as such, at the level of *content* of everyday's life. There are however African scholars like Wole Soyinka, Abiola Irele, Ousmane Sembène, Ngugi wa Thiong'O, Chinweizu *et al* - a group to which I belong - that believe that, apart from the accident of belonging to a geographic enclave known as Africa, and of having had an identical historical experience of slavery and colonialism, *most* black Africans share a unified *structure* of belief-systems and world-outlook whose form is discernable in black Africa's social practices. Other African scholars such as Pauline Hountondji and Anthony Appiah, while being generally sympathetic to the social vision of the Pan-Africanist project, argue that there is no collective metaphysical outlook or social practices within black Africa to recommend it. They argue that if there is anything to recommend it, then, it might be anchored on the accident of geography, i.e., as a designation of ethnicities within the geographic enclave known as Africa, and the historical experience of slavery and colonialism (Mudimbe, 1988: 153-186; Appiah, 1992: 74-171). Finally, in arguing that an African film should be based on African social experience, I do not intend it to be a legislation on approach or appropriate manner of representation, rather, it is intended only as a commonsensical logic that an African film can only lay claim to such a designation by virtue of being produced by an African, for a primary African audience, and in representing African social experience.

The only area where I disagree with Chinweizu *et al*, is in their insistence that only African critical criteria should be applied in the criticism of African literature, and of course, the combative tone of their language in the book. My own argument is that narrative structures are basically the same all over the world. What differs from culture to culture, and region to region, is narrative or story content. Theories of narration formulated in any part of the world, are applicable beyond the borders of their formulators, but since the story content or narrative differs because of the intertextuality of narratives and their implication in culture specific codes and social discourses, criticism should be responsive to these specificities by adopting a comparatist approach in the analysis of texts.

3.3. The Two Major Schools in African Cinema.

Historians of African cinema have noted the existence of two "radically" different theoretical "schools" - the "Med Hondo school", and the "Ousmane Sembène school", that differ in opinion with respect to the formulation of an authentic African film style. The Med Hondo school is said to argue that propaganda does not reside only in the *content* but also in the *form* of Hollywood cinema. African cinema should adopt an anti-imperialist approach to counter Hollywood's images and representations of Africans by devising an appropriate film style different from Hollywood's. On the other hand, the Ousmane Sembène school argues that African cinema should be conceived in terms of its destination: the post-colonial African public. Since the taste of this public has been conditioned by what it refers to as a "cinema of distraction", the African filmmaker should take account of this conditioning in the production of their films if it wants to cultivate and retain public patronage of their works. In the current historical phase in the development of African cinema, it is necessary to retain a form of "classic" - that is to say, comprehensible - narrative without, however, taking up all the clichés of Hollywood cinema (Boughedir, 1982c: 83-84; Ekwuazi, 1987: 88-93).

The arguments of both schools are said to have been reflected in the Algiers Charter on African cinema that led to the formation of Fédération Panafricaine des

Cinéastes (FEPACI) at the Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia in October 1970. But as Ekwuazi has rightly observed, both schools do not seem so radically different after all if one considers them to be responding basically to Hollywood cinematic style (Ekwuazi: 88). Both of them, for instance, agree on the need to create an African film style. They differ, however, in respect of their conception of what should be the nature of African cinema, and its response to the dominant Hollywood practice. The Med Hondo school seems to place more emphasis on a politically-oriented, anti-imperialist cinema while the Ousmane Sembène school emphasises the need to strike a balance between the entertainment and edification needs of the public.

One need not be very rigid in making distinctions between the two so-called schools and the aesthetic preferences of both Sembène and Hondo. Works such as Med Hondo's *Soleil O* (1969), *West Indies* (1979), *Sarraounia* (1986), and Ousmane Sembène's *Emitai* (1971), *Ceddo* (1976), and Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow's *Camp de Thieroye* (1988), all carry strong anti-imperialist tones. However, there is certainly a preoccupation, at least in Hondo's current fictional films, with the colonial era, while those of Sembène tend to bestride both the colonial and post-colonial periods. With regards to Sembène's call for adherence to classical form, Boughedir has noted that Sembène himself cannot be considered to be adhering strictly to this form since most of his films have ambiguous open endings, and are strongly marked by a conscious political tone and message aimed at mobilising the spectator for some form of action to rectify his or her appalling social conditions rather than the appeasing end of classical Hollywood cinema. Boughedir has also argued that one should not confuse "accessibility" of form with "reproduction" of Hollywood model (Boughedir: 85).

3.4. The Categorisation of African Cinema.

Boughedir has proposed a classification of African films that proceeds not from the politics of subjectivisation in film texts, themes or generic types but according to the theoretical positions of their *auteurs* and the ultimate *function* and *effects* of their works. He argues that there are three principal motivations for making films, and in

this respect, three types of African filmmakers. They are: (1) those who make films in order (before anything else) to be of service to their peoples; (2) those who make their films (before anything else) for themselves; and (3) those who make their films (before anything else) for money, glory, career, etc. While agreeing that these positions or tendencies sometimes overlap, he stresses that there is always a dominating *function* in their films. On the basis of this *auteurist functionalist theory*, he argues that there are six auteurist functional tendencies in African cinema which can be taken to represent emergent generic categories. These are: (1) *the political tendency*; (2) *the moralist tendency*; (3) *the commercial tendency*; (4) *the cultural tendency*; (5) *the 'self-expression' tendency*; and (6) *the 'narcissistic intellectual' tendency* (Boughedir, 1982b: 79-81).

Films of the *political tendency*, Boughedir argues, proceed from a preliminary political analysis of the reality they describe. In constituting this reality, however, they assemble the elements in such a way as to provoke reflection by spectators, to raise their consciousness and mobilise them against the injustices of their reality. Films which he includes in this category are Sembène's *Borom Saret* (1963), *Black Girl* (1966), *Emitai* (God of Thunder, 1971), *Ceddo* (1976), and Hondo's *Soleil O* (1969), etc. Filmmakers of the *moralist tendency* tend to criticise the negative aspects of their society without attempting to examine the roots of the social malaise. Often, they depend on the goodwill of the individual to reform society. They tend to think that it is the individual only who ought to change and not also the social structures responsible for breakdown in morality. These films, according to Boughedir, concentrate in general, on scapegoats: fake marabouts and Westernised young women with wigs and mini-skirts who, having taken the wrong path, drag all those who emulate them into moral and social degeneration. He argues that the spectator in these films is positioned as a morally superior person, and from such an elevated moral pedestal, he or she is made to laugh at the misfortunes of the stereotyped morally degenerate characters. Films which he includes in this category are Moma Thiam's *Karim* (1971), and *Baks* (Cannabis, 1974); Mahama Johnson Traore's *Diegue-bi* (The Young Woman, 1970),

and *Lambaaye* (Graft, 1972); Moustapha Alassane's *F.V.V.A. - Femme, villa, voiture, argent* (Wives, Villa, Car, Money, 1972), etc.

The primary objective of films of the *commercial tendency*, is the desire to please the largest number of spectators possible, by selling them emotions - e.g., of laughter, fear, violence, etc. He argues that auteurs of these films never admit that their works are intended as commercial films, and often hide behind the screen of nationalism, moralism or even social satire in their narratives, but their structures, copying the proven box-office successes of the Western cinema of "evasion", always end up contradicting these principled declarations. In this category he groups films such as Tidiane Aw's *Le bracelet de bronze* (1974) and Daniel Kamwa's *Pousse Pousse* (1975), to which one could also add Eddy Ugbomah's *The Mask* (1970), structured after the popular James Bond series.

Films of the *cultural tendency*, claim to have as primary function, the re-evaluation of African culture in the aftermath of colonialism. They are not so much concerned with idealising folklore as they are with restoring with the greatest possible authenticity the way of life and thought of the African popular masses. Filmmakers of this tendency combine a critique of ill-fated traditions with a truly accurate gauging of the general aspirations of the popular masses. Examples include Soulaymane Cissé's *Cinq jours d'une vie* (Five Days in a life, 1972), Oumarou Ganda's *Saitane* (Satan, 1973), Jean-Pierre Dikongue-Pipa's *Muna Moto* (The Other's Child, 1974), etc. With regards to films of the *self-expression tendency*, Boughedir states that their critical acclaim depends more on their form than their content - whether the latter is political, cultural, moralistic, etc. The principal function of these films, is to allow an auteur to express his or her personal vision of the world, to "create", taking a given subject matter as pretext. Though these films please Western film critics, they hardly attract the patronage of African spectators. Films which he groups in this category include Timité Bassori's *La Femme au couteau* (The Woman with a Knife, 1968), Désiré Ecaré's *Concerto pour un exil* (Concerto for an Exile, 1968), *A nous deux, France*

(For us both, France, 1970); Djibril Diop Mamberty's *Touki Bouki* (The Hyenas's Journey, 1973), etc.

Finally, films of the *narcissistic intellectual tendency*, belong to a sub-category of the self-expression tendency. He argues that auteurs of this category of films belong to that group of intellectuals who have been alienated by their contact with the West and have taken their personal problem to be that of the whole nation. Most of the films of such auteurs dwell upon the conflict between tradition and modernity; between the so called soulless West, and a nostalgically conceived idyllic Africa. He states that on the ideological level, these films perpetuate the myth of the Noble Savage so prevalent in ethnographic films of the colonial era. Examples include, Phillippe Maury's *Les Tams Tams se sont tus* (Drums stopped Playing, 1972); Daniel Kamwa's *Boubou-Cravate* (Cross-Breed, 1972), etc. (Boughedir, *ibid.*).

Though Boughedir's classification of African cinema is helpful in that it helps to initiate the process of categorisation of emergent generic types of African films, his method is greatly undermined by his introduction of auteurist functional intentionality as the main plank of critical analysis. Boughedir's placement of emphasis on auteurist intentionality bears the all too recognisable trademarks of his French training and the influence of "la politique des auteurs" proclaimed by the writers of *Cahier du Cinéma*, in the 1950s and 1960s. But in retrospect, auteurism is now generally identified as a product of the romantic phase in film criticism, which is itself an outgrowth of romantic literary criticism that sought to apotheosise a certain category of writers, authors or filmmakers/directors whose works were said to display a high level of originality, finesse, personal style, etc., attributes which romantic critics ascribed to genius. Boughedir's schema for the classification of African cinema would have been adequate for the task he set himself if he had not anchored it on an auteurist theory of functional intentionality.

In the light of current theories of the author, text, subjectivity, spectator, etc., there is a need to reconceptualise these terms in relation to the African cinema. Such a reconception will entail a moderation of Boughedir's classification of African cinema

by relating it to authorial desires for the ideological subjectivisation and thematisation of African social discourses, mythopoetics, politics, culture etc., and the generic types which these desires have produced. Finally, such a reconceptualisation must conceive the author and spectator as functions of the text produced by psychic regimes of desires implicated in the social discourses of the day. In this regard, the text cannot be identified with some God-like pre-textual authority standing outside of discourse with rigid preconceived functional intentionalities. I will return to this point shortly.

Another scholar who has attempted a classification of African cinema is Manthia Diawara. He bases his categorisation on thematic preoccupations which he argues has produced three types of films: *the social realist film*, *the historical colonial confrontation film*, and *the return to the source film*. According to Diawara, films of *the social realist genre*,

draw on contemporary experiences and oppose tradition to modernity, oral to written, agrarian and customary communities to urban and industrialised systems, subsistence economies to highly productive economies. The film-makers often use a traditional position to criticize and link certain forms of modernity to neo-colonialism and cultural imperialism. From a modernist point of view, they also debunk the attempt to romanticize traditional values as pure and original. The heroes are women, children and other marginalized groups that are pushed in the shadow by the elites of tradition and modernity (Diawara, 1989: 111).

He argues that the social realist genre uses narrative forms such as melodrama, satire, and comedy in its narrative thrust and that it is the most popular of the three genres because it uses popular traditional African performance elements such as song, music, and dance, popular theatre and music stars, etc. He states that to capture the spectator's desire on film - a spectator which is constructed as ordinary, urban, working class, unemployed, rural peasantry, etc - the filmmakers transform polemics against the élites into jokes made at the expense of the élites, and include popular musicians and songs, introduce the latest fashion and jargons of the cities, and deal with the themes of polygamy, witchcraft, women's liberation, contemporary politics, etc, in their narratives. Films which he includes in this category are Ousmane Sembène's *Le Mandat* (1968) and *Xala* (1974), Moustapha Alassane's *F.V.V.A. - Femme, Villa, Voiture, Argent* (1972), Mahama Johnson Traore's *Njangan* (1974),

Daniel Kamwa's *Pousse Pousse* (1975), Soulaymane Cissé's *Baara* (1978) and *Finye* (1982), Ben Diogaye Beye's *Sey Seyti* (1980); Kramo-Lacine Fadika's *Djeli* (1981), Ngangura Mweze and Benoit Lamy's *La vie est belle* (1986), etc.

Diawara's second category are films of *the historical colonial confrontation genre*. These films deal with the confrontations between Africans and their European colonisers during the colonial era. He argues that, on the one hand, the majority of African spectators view them with a sense of pride and satisfaction that at last a history of the period from an African perspective is being rendered, and on the other hand, some European spectators characterise them as polemical, poorly constructed, and belonging to the 1960s' rhetorics of violence. He equally states that between 1987 and 1989, both French and British critics used such adjectives about *Sarraounia* (1987), *Heritage Africa* (1988), and *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988), even though these films have been among the most popular during public shows at FESPACO '87 and '89. According to Diawara, these films position the spectators to identify with African people's resistance against European colonialism and imperialist drives:

these stories are about colonial encounters and they often pit African heroes and heroins against European villains. They are conditioned by the desire to show African heroism where European history only mentioned the actions of the conquerors; resistance where the colonial version of history silenced oppositional voices; and the role of women in the armed struggle. For the film-makers, such historical narratives are justified by the need to bring out of the shadow the role played by the African people in the shaping of their own history. It is also the case that they want to film a liberation struggle to keep it forever in people's mind (Diawara: 116).

Some of the films which he places in this category include Ousmane Sembène's *Emitai* (1971) and *Ceddo* (1976), Ahmed Rachadi's *L'opium et le bâton* (1970), Sarah Maldoror's *Sambizanga* (1972), Mohamed Lakhdar-Hamina's *Chroniques des années de braise* (1988), Flora Gomes's *Mortu Nega* (1988), etc. Boughedir overlooks this extremely important category of films in his classification of African cinema, preferring instead, to place them under the general generic type of the *political tendency*. But, while many African films can be said to carry underlying political messages and judgements, they cannot all be claimed to be dealing with this, in addition to the

important exclusive theme of historical confrontations between Africans and Europeans during the colonial era.

The last category in Diawara's classification, are films of *the return to the source genre* - what I will be referring to in this study as films of the folkloric genre because of their nostalgic treatment of folkways and folkloric themes, and by virtue of their narrative being set mostly in the rural areas. Films which Boughedir classifies under *cultural tendency* also belong here. According to Diawara, there are three main reasons why African filmmakers resort to the return to the source genre. They are: (1) to be less overt with the political message in the film in order to avoid censorship; (2) to search for pre-colonial African traditions which can contribute to the solution of contemporary problems; and (3) to search for a new film language. The underlying desire behind the making of these films is to prove the existence of a dynamic African history and culture before the advent of Europeans in Africa and European colonisation of the continent. As he puts it:

unlike the films about historical confrontation which are conventional on the level of form, these films are characterized by the way the director looks at tradition. It is a look that is intent on positing religion where anthropologists only see idolatry, history where they see primitivism, and humanism where they see savage acts. The films are characterized by long takes and long shots with natural sounds most of the time. Unlike conventional film language which uses close-ups to dramatize a narrative moment, the close-ups in these films, like most of the narrative devices, serve to inscribe the beauty of the characters and their tradition (Diawara: 123).

Films which he places in this category include Idrissa Ouedraogo's *Poko* (1978), *Issa le Tisserand* (1985) and *Yaaba* (1989), Oumarou Ganda's *L'Exilé* (1980), and Gaston Kabore's *Wend Kunni* (1982). In addition to these, most of the films adapted from the Yoruba Travelling Theatre tradition, especially those dealing with folkloric themes, belong here.

Though there is a need for the classification of African films, it needs to be relatively flexible, comprehensive, and tidy enough to avoid generic duplication of the sort that would constrain rather than facilitate African film criticism. For instance, with regards to Boughedir's classification, besides overlooking films of the *historical*

colonial confrontation genre, I do not think that the avantgardist text, which, is marked in general by a maverick narrative form and structure that is resistant and antithetical to general narrative coherency can be said to be a major structural element of the texts which he groups under the category of the *self-expression genre*. Moreover, most African filmmakers want to recoup the investments they have made in their film projects, in this respect, there is an underlying commercial tendency within most African film productions. This, in part, explains why most African filmmakers construct their spectators as urban working class/unemployed, and rural peasantry. These people have traditionally formed the bulk of cinema-going audience in Africa.

Though it is true that many of the filmmakers that Boughedir groups under the commercial tendency sometimes resort to Hollywood narrative genres as a strategy for ensuring the commercial success of their films, it would be wrong to argue that most African films that have enjoyed commercial success are films that have adopted proven Hollywood formulae. If anything, the reverse is the case. Most African filmmakers attracted to Hollywood genres have often met with commercial failures because they lacked the technological accompaniments of Hollywood. Since the majority of African spectators are used to Hollywood's renderings of genres, African filmmakers who attempt to imitate Hollywood's versions end up producing amateurish imitations. Such was the case, for instance, when Eddy Ugbomah tried to imitate the James Bond spy series in his production of *The Mask*. It was both a commercial and an artistic failure because Ugbomah lacked the technological and stunt expertises that bring the thrill in this genre.

It will be fair rather to argue that what ensures the commercial success of African films, among African spectators, apart from other narrative contingencies, is the adoption of traditional African performance elements such as song, music, dance, etc, not just as narrative embellishments, but as elements within the narrative structure. This is what has ensured the commercial success of New Nigerian Cinema, the fact that most productions are filmic adaptations of texts from Yoruba Travelling Theatre tradition, texts which were themselves popular dramatic renderings of myths, legends,

historical events, etc, and which have traditionally always enjoyed trans-ethnic spectatorial patronage because their stage productions were based on the African concept of a total performance - that is a narrative that uses traditional African performance elements like song, music, dance, etc, not *just* as embellishments or mood moderator, but as structural elements within the narrative itself. Rather than base the determination of a genre exclusively on the commercial tendency as Boughedir does, I would rather have the commercial tendency considered as one of the underlying desires of the cinematic institution. Finally, at least for the time being, African versions of genres like gangster films, thrillers, science fiction films, etc, have not yet emerged in sufficient numbers, if they have even emerged at all, to warrant a genre theory of these forms that can be traced to commercial tendency.

The main problem with Diawara's categorisation, on the other hand, lies in the rather generalised category of *social realist films* into which he groups the majority of African films. His argument that films of this category draw on "contemporary experiences" and "oppose tradition to modernity", is quite problematic for three main reasons: (1) it seems to imply an underlying reference to the principle of verisimilitude with all its implications for equating representation with reality; (2) if one considers alternatively that the narrative opposition he is referring to is one that is implicated in the politics of representation, one that considers "reality" as a product of the politics of representation, and as a critical construct, then, the restriction of his definition exclusively to "contemporary experiences" can be called into question because the opposition he is referring to actually began with the advent of Europeans in Africa; (3) if his definition of social realism is identified exclusively with "contemporary experiences", then, one could question the rationale for excluding rural reality from contemporary experiences, and if on the other hand, rural reality is included in contemporary experiences, then, Diawara has neglected to inform us what the root(s) of the cravings for alternative rural reality is implied by the generic category which he refers to as *the return to the source genre*.

It seems to me rather that the kind of representation that Diawara describes as breaking with "the intellectualist tradition of African cinema", adopting "populist themes which are dear to the working class and the unemployed", and "transform[ing] the polemics against the *élite* into jokes made at the expense of the *élite*", can at best be qualified as a *critical realist genre* (Diawara: 112). In fact, the whole category of films which he refers to as *social realist films* ought to be referred to appropriately as *critical realist films*. Here, I am using the phrase *critical realism*, in Brechtian terms, to refer to the politics of representation, in terms of its goal, rather than its conventions (Lovell, 1983: 76-77). These are films that basically condemn bribery and corruption, nepotism, ethnicism, political and administrative incompetence, traditional practices like caste discrimination, ritual murders and human sacrifices, etc. On the other hand, films of the folkloric genre, or what Diawara and Boughedir, respectively, refer to as the *return to the source* or the *cultural tendency* genres, are films driven principally by nostalgia and the desire to protect, what filmmakers of this category, perceive to be the erosion of traditional African norms and values. But beneath this manifest nostalgia, there is also a latent desire to invoke tradition, in response to racist and colonialist discourses. Often, because of the proliferation of racist and colonialist discursive representations of Africans or people of African descent, most of the filmmakers who resort to this genre have come to believe rather erroneously that the problems of modernity and urbanisation are *not* the problems of modernisation as such but the symptoms of the advance of European civilisation. This mentality, as Robert Stam (1991) has argued, is essentially a product of racist and colonialist qualification of science and technology as an exclusive European invention and legacy to the rest of humanity, an argument that moreover equates science and technology with culture and civilisation, and hence, the equation of science and technology with Europeaness, and *ipso facto*, world culture and civilisation with Europeaness.

Faced with the racist argument that Africans have made no contributions whatsoever to human civilisation, the apostates and defenders of Africa's contributions to human civilisation either lay claim to ancient Egypt or march off into the nearest

underdeveloped rural African village and begin to postulate on how self-contented and self-sufficient we once were before European intrusion, etc., invoking inadvertently the ghost of the noble savage, and playing right into the hands of the perpetrators of these racist arguments. For the sake of argument, let me state that even if we made the greatest contributions to human civilisation, even if ancient Egyptian civilisation was built by blacks or grew out of older civilisations southerly along the Nile river valley; even if there are other equally valuable ancient civilisations elsewhere in Africa, if *even* humanity itself originated in Africa, these facts cannot in themselves erase the legacies of our history - we were enslaved and colonised by Europeans, and to a large extent, they still dictate the state of affairs on the continent. But to acknowledge European hegemony in modern world affairs is different from characterising science and technology as an exclusive European invention.

African scholars, writers, artists, or filmmakers, who, because of Eurocentric discourses, characterise and equate science and technology with Europeanness, also equate modernisation with Europeanness, a position that seems to imply that if I use a ball pen, television and satellite dish, drive a car, travel by jet plane, or even set up a factory to produce these or other items of modern life style, then, I am becoming European. By equating science and technology with Europeanness, they seem to imply that the entire on-going process of social development in Africa is a Europeanisation of the continent, hence the often hysterical drive for the return to the source. While I do not intend to downplay the proliferation of European culture in Africa as a result of colonialism, there is a need to reconceptualise the experience as an interactive two-way phenomenon. Furthermore, the craving for the source, for folk traditional values, etc, is an essential human craving, one that is first and foremost a product of dissatisfaction with one's present state, and a nostalgia for the past, a past that is moreover romanticised in terms of a golden age that in actual fact never existed. What further complicates the African experience of such a craving is that the very existence of a canon of discursive practice that devalues the humanity of Africans means that such cravings, more often than not, carry far larger implications than a mere desire for

closeness to nature. While it is true, as Diawara argues, that there are instances when filmmakers resort to mythopoetics in order to avoid censorship, it is equally the case that the context of such productions often implicates such films within the realm of critical realism.

From all indications therefore, there are presently three distinguishable genres in African cinema. They are: *the critical realist film*, *the colonial encounter film*, and *the folkloric film*. However, the majority of films currently produced on the continent, fall within the critical realist category. While many of the films criticise the excesses of the élites, the problem of ethnicism, corruption, etc, they also enjoin the masses to cultivate the spirit of self-help and self-reliance as a strategy in community development. Finally, many of the films are also concerned with the question of the most appropriate strategy for negotiating one's way through modernity without losing valuable traditional African norm and values. In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall be proposing a general cinematic reading hypothesis based on the concept of subjectivity as a theoretical framework for the criticism of African cinema.

3.5. Toward A General Cinematic Reading Hypothesis Of African Cinema.

Some of the major problems currently plaguing the criticism of African cinema are: lack of attention to the specificity of the cinematic medium, especially with regards to the nature of narration in film, the question of subjectivity and its attendant aspects like the representation of the relation of subjectivity to race, ethnicity, gender, and class, the questions of authorship, spectatorship, etc. In proposing a general cinematic reading hypothesis of African cinema, I shall be responding to these key issues with a view to making the criticism of African cinema much more responsive to the specificity of narration in film. The main argument which I shall be pursuing is that comprehending the nature of film narration is a prelude to understanding film and of rendering a critical analysis that is responsive to the specificity of the medium. I shall be anchoring my reading hypothesis on the concept of subjectivity and its relation to the nature of narration in film. I shall also be examining its relation to concepts of narrator,

authorship, narrative authority, race, ethnicity, gender, class, spectatorship, etc., and the general spatio-temporal articulations within a text. I shall be using the word subjectivity throughout this study to refer to a general theory of characterisation and character representation.

To understand the nature of filmic narration a major distinction needs to be established from the outset between the activity of narration and what is narrated, between the act of telling (narration) and what is told (narrated). It is a distinction which Émile Benveniste renders in establishing the role of pronouns in the location of the subject in utterance, distinguishing between subject and predicate, and ultimately between *histoire* and *discours*, in which the former (history) involves an utterance from which all markers of enunciation have been effaced, and the latter (discourse) involves an utterance in which such markers are present (Stam *et al*, 1992: 210-211, Nowell-Smith, 1981: 232-241). Film is a form of discourse, a textual system which implicates the subject in the activity of telling, viewing, listening, etc. The result of that activity is an object: what is told, viewed, listened to etc.- e.g. character, events themes, etc. Subjectivity can therefore be used to distinguish between levels of narration in film. For instance, character narration, e.g., the point-of-view (POV) shot, is an indication of a shift in the level of narration as well as reception. In the POV shot, we see what a character sees from his or her point in space. It is the transference of the authority of narration to an agent within narrative. Though what the character sees, talks about, listens to, etc., is an object of narration, both "subject" and "object" are not fixed terms but indicative of a relationship between two elements in narration. For instance, a riot scene may be the object of vision of a character who may be the object of a voice-over narrator who may be the object of attention for a viewer. Thus the boundary lines between subject and object, narration and narrative, are never absolute; rather, they shift according to the scope of narration. To fully comprehend a film text therefore, one needs to understand the successive shifts in the relation of subject to object in narration.

Subjectivity can also be used to measure the level of temporality in film narration. For instance, in a POV shot, diegetic time is usually continuous, whereas in a subjective/character flashback, discontinuity is established between diegetic time and the time range of the events related in the flashback. In *Chocolat* (Claire Denis, 1988) for instance, the subjective flashback which relates events in the life of young France (Cécile Ducas) in colonial Cameroon, events which form the main body of the film, is established through adult France's (Mireille Machinard) contemplation of her father's diary; the memory recall is therefore effected through a look directed at the diary. The events related in the flashback covers several years whereas adult France's visit to Cameroon is more of a tourist engagement of a few weeks.

Subjectivity or character narration can be classified into four broad categories: subjective flashback (cited above), mental process narration, character reflection, and character projection. Mental process narration involves the representation of a character's dream or projected thoughts in space. Such projected thoughts could be day-dreaming, fantasising one's desires, etc. In both dream sequences or projected thoughts, the character's mental condition serves as the unity or coherence of the representation. In mental process narration, discontinuity is established in temporal relations; time is no longer continuous or simultaneous. Time becomes a property of the dreamer or the character whose thought is projected. In character reflection, on the other hand, a character projects his or her body into space, not just the mental state. Character reflection is often achieved through a mirror surface placed in the *mise en scène*. However, not all mirror reflections are subjective; some are used to reveal off-screen space and action. The mirror device becomes subjective only when a character looks into it and sees him or herself. In a reflective subjectivity therefore, there is literally a frame within a frame which signals a new and distinct level of narration. For instance, the inner frame in a reflective subjectivity displays a series of spaces generated by and subordinated to the character who initiates the look into the mirror. Hence when a character looks into a mirror, he or she sees himself or herself as both subject and object. In character reflection, there is both simultaneity of action and

temporality, except in cases where such processes of self-reflection through look into a mirror generates, additionally, past memories (Branigan, 1984: 73-100; Browne, 1981: 251-260).

Character projection, on the other hand, is realised through metaphorical identification of space with a character. It differs from character reflection because the subject's mental state is made explicit beyond the mere presence and normal awareness of a character. For instance, in *El Chacal de Nahueltoro* (The Jackal of Nahueltoro, Miguel Littin, 1969), after the psychopathic murderer (Nelson Villagra) has killed a widowed mother and her children who played host to him, to save them from suffering after they are ejected from their house by the land owner in whose estate farm the late husband of the woman worked, as he goes about giddily burying them one after the other, his mental state of drunkenness is reflected in the giddiness of the space, but since the space is not produced through a POV structure, dream state or thought projection, etc., we attribute it to him nonetheless through metaphorical transference, especially since he was drunk before he carried out the crime. Through such processes of metaphorical transference, changes in colour, scene, lighting, etc., may be attributed to a character once there are enough justification within levels of narration to warrant such a reading. In character projection, time is continuous with action. In addition to character narration through POV shot, character flashback, mental state, reflection, and projection, there is also *aural* POV in which we hear from a character's point in space. In an objective case, such hearing is of a direct nature that other characters within the narrative diegesis can share - e.g. telephone call, eavesdropping on gossip, etc. But there are also cases in aural POV in which we hear a character hearing imaginary noises and voices that diegetic characters do not hear.

Even though character narration is an evidence of a second level of meaning in a text, evidence of delegated narration, underlying every such first person narration, is the authority of the third person omniscient narrator which creates the fictional appearances of the other levels of narration within a text. Fundamentally therefore, there is a single activity of narration in a text, or, personifying that activity, there can

be *only* a single narrator in a text. In this regard, the delegation of the activity of narration to a character, is an act of *framing*. The new narrator must therefore be identified (referred to) before we recognise the initiation of a new level of narration, the incidence of a story within a story. In addition to cases of subjective framing in which a story is attributed to a character within the narrative diegesis, there are also cases of objective framing in which the new story is not a production of a single character. For instance, in a film, there may be a rehearsal of a play, dance piece, or opera, which may proceed into a production within the film; however, while such instances produce the structure of a story within a story, the framed story in this case, is an act of objective production. Nevertheless, there always exists in a text, an underlining omniscient narrator who authorises the other levels of narration. The effect of a change in narration is that it signals a change in the relationship of the reader to the activity of narration. In other words, the introduction of a new narrator is a formal acknowledgement that the conditions have changed under which we acquire knowledge from the text. As a result of the superintending authority of the omniscient narrator, nominal narrators may indulge in lies, dreams, fantasies, etc., but the truth of the text is revealed in the end at the level of omniscient narration. Parallel to a first person nominal narrator, there may also be voice-over narrators as well as voice-over narratees who may fill in for the reader by voicing doubts, wondering, or laughing, as in the laughter track of television comedies (Branigan: 42-47).

Subjectivity can also be used in explicating the nature of filmic narration by examining the concepts of *origin* and *destination* of the sound/space within levels of narration in relation to differences produced in *diegesis*. Diegesis, as a concept of narration, is a subcategory of origin because it seeks to assign a source to the sound/space of a film with regards to specifying whether the production of sound/space is within or outside the story space. The diegesis in film comprises those elements within narration which give rise to the fictional world of characters, landscape, and events in a text. The diegesis is thus the implied spatial, temporal, and causal system of the characters. It includes aspects of the fictional world which are

accessible to characters within the narrative. In this regard, a sound, for instance, is non-diegetic if it is not heard by a character within the narrative even if the sound later also functions diegetically by serving as a sound bridge between scenes. The problem addressed by the concept of diegesis is therefore one of the relation of character to sound and space. Thus as the relation between character and sound/space changes, so too does the viewer's relation to character and sound/space. The result of such changes is the production of different perspectives on the story.

By using the concept of origin, destination, and diegesis, we are able to give a proper breakdown of the classes of production with respect to narrators and readers. For instance, the third person or omniscient narrator is that level of narration which is assigned no origin by the text. Its authority lies in the fact that it presents the fictional world as if it is independently revealing itself. On the other hand, the subjective or first person narrator is that attributed to a particular origin within narrative diegesis (character) or outside the narrative diegesis (voice-over narrator). The obverse correspondence of the omniscient narrator, is the *voyeuristic* reader or the unseen and unacknowledged spectator for whom an address is seemingly presented as if to no one - that is, the text does not acknowledge its viewer; it is as if the world is caught unawares. By contrast, the *personal* address is a direct second person address. In diegetic narration, the personal is a character who receives (listens, watches) the story, the bystander in a scene who exists only for his or her reaction shot. In most Third World films, a personal address is sometimes aimed outside the narrative diegesis - i.e., when a character stares direct into the camera and addresses a non-diegetic viewer. Though character is an important agent for determining the origin (or take-off point) of the story, or of determining the relation of sound/space to levels of narration, other sorts of entities like diaries, landscapes, factories, etc., can also serve a similar purpose. However, the unity and coherence derived from the application of such non-human entities as source or origin of narrative is a product of human agency or a mechanism of characterisation. The reader's task therefore, is to determine those markers that

divide the text into levels of narration (diegetic and non-diegetic) and the function of the narrator in the production of these levels (Branigan, *ibid.*).

The next element of narration which I would like to address is the spatial properties of the text. The term required to specify the spatial properties of a film is the camera. Here, I am considering the camera as the mechanism for reading the fluctuation of space. For instance, properties of the *mise en scène* such as acting, gestures, locale, lighting, costumes, scenic decorations, etc., are products of the structuring activity of the camera. This activity is realised through the properties of the camera such as lens, angle, positions, distance, focus, filters, and movement. The camera I am referring to is the reader's "camera", the spatial structuring principle of filmic narration, not the physical camera of film production. What the reader experiences are changes in the fluctuation of space. The camera is therefore a label we apply to the reading of the fluctuation of space in acknowledgement of the physical camera of film production. In this regard, it will be appropriate to speak of spaces in recognition of the series of consecutive labels we apply to the fluctuation of space. In specifying the classes of filmic narration, the place to begin is the spatial properties of the camera such as camera placement and movement. Camera placement may be characterised as either *motivated* or *unmotivated*. According to Branigan, a motivated camera is used to establish scenographic space, to follow or anticipate movement by a character or object, to select a narrative detail - e.g., an inserted dolly shot of an object or facial expression, and to reveal character subjectivity. An unmotivated camera is evidence of an activity of framing which lags behind or searches out narrative detail - e.g., when we often seem to arrive at a scene of action a moment too late to witness significant events or when the camera seems to arrive long before the character (Branigan: 45).

To understand the narrational activity of a text, one must be able to make intelligible or comprehend the spaces of a film. Space can be defined as the placement and displacement of *frame lines*; the frame is stressed because it is the measure and logic of the simultaneity of textual elements - to frame is to bracket an array of

elements. Frame is the perceptual boundary which divides what is represented from what is not represented. Though the displacement of frame lines is the work of camera movement, other properties of the camera such as zoom shot, optical and special effects, rack focus, split screens, animation, etc, can also be used to effect frame displacement. In addition, properties of camera movement such as dolly, track, crane, pan, tilt, and lateral tilt, can also effect displacement in frame lines.

What I have been examining thus far are codes of narration, narrational elements within the text which indicate levels of narration. I have also examined the spatial and temporal signs of narration as they affect the concept of subjectivity. Next, I want to turn my attention to the codes of narrative and the effects they have on the concept of subjectivity. By codes, here, I mean the correlational rules that couple or relate the elements of a syntactic type of a system to a semantic type. Different sorts of rules are involved with varying degree to correlate, shift, and replace elements in a narrative. Some of the codes of narration which I have dealt with so far represent established social conventions, a cultural practice, within the cinematic institution that is acquired through training. In this regard, the structure generated by codes is a special sort of structure since it depends on skills or procedures which are culturally acquired. Understanding the nature of the operation performed on codes in the production of a story is therefore important in comprehending film narration and rendering critical analysis that is responsive to the specificity of the medium.

Roland Barthes, in his book, *S.Z.*, has classified the codes of narrative into five categories: *the hermeneutic code*, *the proairetic code*, *the semic code*, *the cultural code*, and *the symbolic code*. Though his formulations were conceived in relation to literature, Branigan has demonstrated their applicability to film. According to Branigan, the hermeneutic code is that code which at various times names a subject, states a condition, propose a question, delays its answer in multifarious ways, and finally discloses the answer (usually at the end) which is the truth of the narrative. The proairetic is a code of actions, consequence, gestures, and behaviour which becomes sequences (e.g., stroll, murder, argument, etc.) when and because they are given a

name in the process of reading. The proairetic is a cause-effect chain whose logic is that of the probable, of practical experience, of psychology, of culture, of history, of what is familiar: "the already done", "the already written", "the already seen". The semic code is that code which includes the connotations of persons, place, or object. The semic constructs the characters and ambience of narrative. The cultural or referential code refers to any generally accepted body of knowledge or wisdom generated by a culture - e.g., psychology, history, science, literature, aphorism. It is an inter-textual code because it strictly refers to *other* cultural texts. Finally, the symbolic is a code of meaning/relation based on the figures of rhetorics, the trait of the body, or economic (exchange) systems.

Branigan states that two basic operations may be performed on the codes: distribution and integration. He refers to distribution as the principle of articulation, segmentation, or form, a process along any one code which disperses its elements, often inserting unpredictable expansions between the elements. In this sense, character development can be considered a distributional property of the semic code. On the other hand, he refers to integration as the principle of structuration and meaning, a relational aspect of two or more codes, a braiding and weaving of codes. The operation or interaction of codes is therefore necessary because no narrative code can stand alone and still form a narrative. In order for a narrative to exist, the codes - both those pertaining to the principles of narration in the medium, and those of narrative derived from the socio-cultural world of the text - must interact with each other at some minimal level. The function of integration is precisely to specify hierarchical relations among the codes. To speak of hierarchical relations or levels is therefore to examine the structuration of a work rather than to merely describe the structures within the work. Consequently, the process through which codes are structured into narrative is narration (Branigan: 35-36; Stam *et al*: 192-196).

In Chapter Five, the argument I shall be pursuing is that the representation of African subjectivity in colonialist African cinema, is a legacy of the continual reproduction of images of blackness, and by extension, of Africans in European

culture. In this regards, it is the product of the distributional properties of both the semic and cultural codes. As I have argued in my literature review, most of the reproduction has come into the cinema via literature.

The next issue I want to examine is the question of the relation of the author and the spectator to the film text. This issue has its roots in auteurism, associated especially with *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Movie* and Andrew Sarris. In retrospect, auteurism is now identified as a product of the romantic phase in film criticism, which is itself an outgrowth of romantic literary criticism that sought to apotheosise a certain category of writers, authors or filmmakers/directors whose works are said to display a high level of originality, finesse, personal style, etc. The hallmark of the elevation of this critical policy to a theoretical construct, itself a product of the mistranslation of 'la politique des auteurs' to auteur theory in the early sixties by Andrew Sarris, is predicated upon the application of technical competence of the director, his or her distinguishable personal style, and the interior meaning of a film, as critical criteria for filmic analysis. This critical practice depended on the recognition of a "pantheon of directors" and the cultivation of the cult of directors (Buscombe, 1981: 22-34; Sarris, 1981: 62-67). Auteurist critical practice, by its elevation of the director to a God-like pedestal of individual personal expression, places him or her above the flux of social discourses in which he/she is implicated, and from which he/she creates. This critical practice is also built on the communication model in which the director/filmmaker is conceived as an active communicator of a message which is then taken up by a passive spectator/viewer - a model that does not account for the labour and activity of viewing.

In its extreme negative instances, auteurism sometimes takes a path of critical inquiry that involves using a director's biographical data as material for discovering the director's functional intentionality - a kind of inquisition into the social background, psychological make-up or disposition of the director as made manifest through choices of codes and forms of narration, thematic emphasis, etc. On the other hand, in its extreme creative instances, auteurism involves the analysis of *mise en scène* as the site

of directorial creativity; but the elevation of *mise en scène* to the exclusive site of creativity also undermines, as John Caughie points out, the effectivity of visual discourse: "In auteurist criticism *mise en scène* begins to be conceived as effectivity, producing meanings and relating spectators to meanings, rather than as a transparency allowing them to be seen" (Caughie, 1981: 13). As he observes, the intervention of semiotics and psychoanalysis into the field of film theory, "has tended to shatter the unity of the author, scattering fragments over the whole terrain, calling into question the possibility of a theory of the author which is not also a theory of ideologies, of discourses, of commodities and, crucially, of the subject" (ibid.: 200).

It is also interesting to note that as a result of the attempt to correct romantic notions of the author, certain theorists, especially those influenced by the works of Roland Barthes, have attempted to define the author exclusively as an effect of the text. This is the position which Edward Branigan, for instance, takes in his book, *Point of View in the Cinema*. However, in attempting to define the relation of the author to the text, I shall be taking a middle ground position. Rather than having the author as someone standing outside of language, discourse, ideologies, etc., as the source of text, or at the other extreme end as an exclusive effect of the text, I shall be conceiving the author as a subject-author, driven by both conscious and unconscious desires, and implicated in the text through language, codes and forms of discourses - both filmic and extra-filmic, cultural referential discourses - ideologies, etc; and as a unifying term for the organisation of language, cultural and filmic codes, into forms of filmic narration and discourse with implications for character-subjectivity and spectatorial textual positioning. This is the sense in which Stephen Heath conceives of the relation of the author to the text when he argues that

the function of the author (the effect of the idea of authorship) is a function of unity; the use of the notion of the author involves the organisation of the film (as 'work') and, in so doing, it avoids - this is indeed its function - the thinking of the articulation of film text in relation to ideology. *A theory of the subject represents precisely an attempt, at one level, to grasp the constructions of the subject in ideology (the modes of subjectivity) (my emphasis); it thus allows at once the articulation of contradictions in the film text other than in relation to an englobing consciousness, in relation, that is, to a specific historico-social process, and the*

recognition of a heterogeneity of structures, codes, languages at work in the film and of the particular positions of the subject they impose (Heath, 1981: 217).

Just as the author is a subject implicated in discourse, so too the spectator. Unlike the models of mass audience offered by empirical or sociological approaches to the study of film - e.g., conceptions of the spectator as a mass audience who go to the movies, and unlike the notion of a consciously aware viewer hypothesised by formalist approaches, e.g., people who have conscious artistic ideas and interpretations about what they see, I shall be conceiving the spectator in psychoanalytic terms as someone liable to manipulation because of the psychic implication of the spectator in the machinery of filmic production, through projections or withholding of one's desires and fantasies upon character-subjectivities in texts. This is the sense in which Stam *et al* conceive the relation of the spectator to the text when they argue that

psychoanalytic film theory sees the viewer not as a person, a flesh-and-blood individual, but as an artificial construct produced and activated by the cinematic apparatus. This spectator is conceived as a "space" that is both "productive" (as in the production of the dream-work or other unconscious fantasy structures) and "empty" (anyone can occupy it); to achieve this ambiguous duality, the cinema in some sense "constructs" its spectator along a number of psychoanalytic modalities that link the dreamer to the film viewer. But a film is not exactly the same thing as a dream; in order for the film spectator to become the subject of a fantasy that is not self-generated, a situation must be produced in which the viewer is more immediately vulnerable and more likely to let his own fantasies work themselves into those offered by the fiction machine (Stam *et al*: 147).

Psychoanalytic theorisation of the spectator therefore hinges on the distinction between the *real person* (as an individual) and the *spectator* (as a construct), and it draws on the operations of the unconscious to explain it. Five intersecting factors go into the psychoanalytic construction of the viewer: (1) the production of a state of regression; (2) the construction of a situation of belief; (3) the activation of mechanisms of primary identification (onto which secondary identifications are then "grafted"; (4) the putting into play of fantasy structures, such as family romance, by the cinematic fiction; and (5) the concealment of the "marks of enunciation" that stamp the film with authorship. The success achieved in the manipulation of the spectator therefore depends very much upon the psychic nature of human desires and their roots

in fantasy. Christian Metz, in his essay, "The Imaginary Signifier", also acknowledges the "dual kinship" between the psychic life of the spectator, and the financial or industrial mechanisms of the cinema in order to show how the reciprocal relations between the psychological components of the cinematic institution work to create in viewers not only a belief in the impression of reality offered by its fictions, but deep psychic gratifications and a desire to continually return. He further states that the cinematic apparatus is made up of four interlocking processes that make up the cinematic viewing situation: (1) the technical base (specific effects produced by the various components of the film equipment, including camera, lights, film and projector); (2) the conditions of film projection (the darkened theatre, the immobility implied by the seating, the illuminated screen in front, and the light beam projected from behind the spectator's head; (3) the film itself, as a "text" (involving various devices to represent visual space, the creation of believable impression of reality); and (4) that "mental machinery" of the spectator (including conscious perceptual as well as unconscious and preconscious processes) that constitute the spectator as subject (Stam *et al*, *ibid.*).

Although the cinematic apparatus is defined as a complex of four interlocking processes, the most salient feature of this apparatus is its construction of a *dream state*. Certain conditions make film viewing similar to dreaming: we are in a darkened room, our motor activity is reduced, and our visual perception is heightened to compensate for our lack of physical mobility. As a result of this viewing situation, the film spectator enters into a *regime of belief* where everything is accepted as real. Stam *et al* state, for instance, that the cinema can achieve its greatest power of fascination over the viewer not simply because of this impression of reality, but because this impression of reality is intensified by the conditions of the dream state which produces an affect known as *fiction effect* (Stam *et al*: 142-144).

It is this fiction effect which allows the spectator to have the feeling that he or she is actually participating in the production of the cinematic fiction, dreaming the images and the situations that appear on the screen. With the spectator locked in a

dream state, there is an inducement of artificial regression that make it difficult for the spectator to distinguish between self and other. It is this trans-sexual, racial, ethnic, class, etc., dream state of artificial regression that makes it possible for the spectator to get locked into a state of identification with character subjectivity. For instance, when as a child I identified John Wayne as my hero, it was an identification that entails the projection of my sense of heroism upon the actor, John Wayne; it was a purely apolitical self-narcissistic act which we all engage in as uncritical spectators. Incidentally, structural mechanisms of film narration such as the setting up of struggles between villains and morally upright persons, the activation of mechanisms of suspense, and delayed revelation of narrative enigmas, make the spectator much more vulnerable to identifying with the textually constructed spectatorial subject positions. Having said this, the position of the *critical spectator* needs distinguishing from the hypothetical spectator constructed in the text. I am using the term, critical spectator, to distinguish the level of critical interpretation, an instance of critical reading by an informed viewer who, because of his or her knowledge of the processes and strategies of set in motion through filmic narration, is able to adopt alternative critical position antithetical to that constructed by text.

I have been arguing thus far that understanding the activity of filmic narration is a necessary prelude to giving critical analyses that are responsive to the specificity of film as a narrative medium. In addition, character-subjectivity is pivotal to understanding the nature of filmic narration because it is helpful in distinguishing between various levels of narration within a text and the agent(s) responsible for their production. For instance, through character-subjectivity, the various types of character narration and their modes of production can be mastered. Mastering these codes of narration is an important step to mastering the spatial and temporal orders of a film text. Furthermore, an understanding of the manner in which character-subjectivity is constructed textually in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, class, etc., is necessary for determining the nature of spectatorial textual positions constructed for the text, and the power relations implicated in such constructions. Reading a film therefore involves

making a lot of inferences and hypotheses about the nature of the spatial and temporal orders produced in a text and the agent(s) responsible for their production. A cinematic reading hypothesis is not just anything a reader may conceive of a text, but what is internally justified in it, and ultimately, the ideas justified in a text reflect shared assumptions/expectations of a community with respect to a set text. In addition, the way we read is inter-subjective and inter-textual, and depends on cultural conventions just as a language belongs not to an individual but to a group.

3.6. Conclusion.

I have attempted in this chapter, a definition of African cinema, examined its nature with emphasis on emergent generic types, and analysed how issues of African identity and subjecthood, belief-systems and culture, and the problem of tradition versus modernity, are addressed by African filmmakers. Finally, I have proposed a general cinematic reading hypothesis, anchored on the concept of subjectivity, as a theoretical framework for the criticism of African cinema.

CHAPTER FOUR.

COLONIAL AFRICAN INSTRUCTIONAL CINEMA.

4.1. Introduction.

In this chapter, I shall be examining the historical context within which the practice of colonial African instructional cinema was instituted in Africa during the colonial era. I shall be doing this by tracing the origin of instructional film practice in Africa and examining how it was institutionalised through projects such as the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment and those projects which later followed such as the instructional film practices of the Colonial Film Unit (CFU), the Film and Photo Bureau of the Belgian Congo, and the Centre for Catholic Action Cinema (C.C.A.C.C.) of the same territory. This background information is intended to establish the context within which the practices of instructional cinema emerged in Africa during the colonial period. The argument I shall be pursuing in this chapter is that the practices of instructional cinema instituted a different régime of representation of Africa and Africans that stand in direct contrast to that of films of colonialist African cinema. In most of the writings on cinematic practices in colonial Africa, this distinction is never acknowledged (Malkmus and Armes, 1992: 3-35; Smyth, 1979, 1983; Richards and Aldgate, 1983; Diawara, 1992: 2-11). The impression one is left with is therefore one which makes one believe that all the films about Africa produced by Europeans during the colonial period, were colonialist.

Though films of colonial African instructional cinema belong to the documentary form which carries very strong suggestions of actuality, I shall be considering them first and foremost as discursive texts with specific modes of representation and forms of subjectivities, and also because I believe no matter how close to reality representation in documentary form is imagined to be, it will always remain that, representation. As Bill Nichols aptly puts the argument,

many documentarists would appear to believe what fiction film-makers only feign to believe, or openly question: that film-making creates an objective representation of the way things really are. Such documentaries use the magical template of verisimilitude without the story teller's open resort to artifice. Very few seem prepared to admit through the very tissue and texture of

their work that all film-making is a form of discourse fabricating its effects, impressions, and point of view (Nichols, 1983: 18).

Nichols argues that documentary cinema is a discursive form and maintains that the discursive strategies deployed in the form, like those of narrative cinema, change, and that they have history. Discursive strategies in documentary change because the arena of ideological contestation shifts, and as a result, "new strategies must constantly be fabricated to represent 'things as they are' and still others to contest this very representation" (ibid: 17).

Among the styles which have developed in response to shifts in conceptions of realism in documentary, Nichols cites the following: (1) the direct address style of the Griersonian tradition - or in its most excessive form, the March of Times' "Voice of God"; (2) *cinéma vérité*; (3) direct address, either by a narrator speaking directly to the viewer, or character-narrators through interviews, addressing viewers directly, or a combination of both; (4) self-reflexive documentaries which mix observational passages with interviews, the voice-over of the filmmaker with intertitles, thereby making patently clear what has been implicit all along: documentaries always were forms of re-presentation, never clear windows onto "reality"; and (5) the modernist text which, through its application of a multiplicity of voices, direct and indirect forms of addresses, intertitles, etc, presents two levels of historical reference - evidence and argument - and two levels of textual structure - observation and exposition (Nichols: 17-18). Most of the instructional films belong to the first category of Nichols's classification, and they approach narration either through the "Voice of God" or voice-over narrator as in the case of *Men of Africa* (Alexander Shaw, 1939) or are dramatised documentaries which use a combination of voice-over narrators and omniscient and character narrations as in the case of *Daybreak in Udi* (Terry Bishop, 1948). Though Nichols does not include dramatised documentary in his categorisation, his argument that documentary cinema is a form of discourse is enough for its inclusion.

To conclude this chapter, I shall be carrying out a case study of two films belonging to the tradition of colonial African instructional cinema, *Men of Africa*, and *Daybreak in Udi*, to demonstrate how Africa and Africans were represented in instructional cinema, and why the nature of African subjectivities that emerges in this practice is antithetical to that in colonialist African cinema of the same period.

4.2. The Historical Background of Colonial African Instructional Cinema.

The introduction of instructional cinema into sub-saharan Africa during the colonial era by the British colonial governments, and other government and non-governmental agencies, was informed by the desire to exploit the educational capacities of the medium as well as to counter the influence of Hollywood films in its colonies. Instructional film practice was introduced first in Nigeria in the late 1920s by the colonial government as a visual aid to an ongoing government campaign to eradicate an outbreak of a plague in Lagos in 1929. As a result of the success of this pioneering effort by William Seller, the use of film as a medium of instruction and propagation of government developmental programmes was extended to other British territories. The Central Office of Information (COI) bulletin gave the following account of how the cinema was adopted as a medium of instruction and propagation of government policies in British colonies:

in the late 1920s lantern slides were being used to illustrate lectures on health in Nigeria, and it was in this territory, to combat an outbreak of plague in Lagos in 1929, that the film was employed for the first time in any colonial territory as medium of information and education. In the campaign, the film was used to illustrate to Africans the way in which rats carry the disease and to enlist the co-operation of Africans in killing the plague-bearing rats. The success of the campaign was such that from that time the film was increasingly used in West Africa (Central Office of Information (COI) Bulletin No.R. 3161, October, 1955: 1).

In spite of the success of this pioneering attempt, no immediate serious effort was made to institutionalise the practice of instructional cinema until 1939 when the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) was established. By the second half of the 1920s, however, the Colonial Office began to explore the implications of the cinema for the colonies

and for colonial power. The initial impulse to regulate the influence of the cinema in British territories resulted from the perceived threat to British interests of the commercial cinema, especially Hollywood. Rosaleen Smyth has noted that

in the African colonies the concern of the Colonial Office was how the cinema affected British economic and political interests, and how Britain might use the cinema to promote what it determined to be the economic, social, and moral welfare of the colonial peoples. Britain felt that both her economic and political interests in Africa were threatened by the stranglehold which the American film had gained on the commercial cinema circuit in the 1920s (Smyth, 1983: 129).

Attempts made to break the influence of Hollywood failed, however, because many colonies, especially those in Southern and Eastern Africa, had already entered contractual agreements with South Africa based film distributors for supplies of commercial films. As a result, the Colonial Office was forced to limit itself to the negative sanction of censorship; and in this regard, urged colonial governments to be aware of films which might discredit the armed forces or arouse undesirable racial feeling. At this period also, the Colonial Office began to give serious thought to an alternative form of cinema to the dominant Hollywood practice, one which would combine instruction with entertainment. Since most Africans were at this time illiterate, the cinema was thought to offer bright possibilities as a medium of instruction.

In 1927, Hans Vischer, Secretary to the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies (ACEC), recommended to the Colonial Office Conference on Education in the Colonies, that the cinema should be used to spread general knowledge about health and economic development in the colonies. In 1929, Julian Huxley went to East Africa for ACEC to test African reactions to instructional films. He concluded after observing reactions to the pilot programme for the education of adults, that the cinema could be used for both educational and propaganda means. At the time Huxley carried out his pilot programme however, local experiments were already being made on the use of film as an instrument for the dissemination of government health policies by two colonial government health officials, William Sellers in Nigeria, and A. Paterson in Kenya.

After the pilot programme by Julian Huxley in 1929, the Colonial Office agreed in principle that the cinematic medium was an invaluable tool for adult education and social development. Still, it would not commit itself financially to the implementation of its findings. Indeed, this lack of financial commitment by the Colonial Office towards the development of the colonies was the subject of several reports that were critical of British colonial administration which appeared just before the outbreak of the war. The consensus was that the British government needed to spend more money on colonial development, hence the enactment of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 (Smyth: 131-132). As a result of the Colonial Office's lack of financial commitment to instructional cinema, the ultimate credit for the actual institution of the practice of instructional cinema goes to the pioneer of the programme, the International Missionary Council (IMC).

In 1932, the Department of Social and Industrial Research of the IMC, sent a commission under the leadership of J. Merle Davis to Northern Rhodesia and the Belgian Congo, to study the effects of the heavy industries of the Copper Belt upon African customs and life-style. Among the findings of the commission was that the social fabric of African society was being undermined by the rapid pace of industrialisation in the region. One noted feature of this process was the widening gap between the outlooks and ways of life of urbanised Africans in contrast to those of the rural areas. Another finding was the lack of recreational facilities for urbanised Africans who were getting cut off from their traditional forms of entertainment. As a result of their urbanised outlook, the youths, after their training in missionary or government schools, tended to live in a world that was quite bewildering to their elders in the villages. The commission therefore recommended that the cinema should be used as a means of explaining to the elders the new world which was rapidly advancing upon them as well as a means of providing entertainment to urban dwellers. Towards this end, in 1933, the Department of Social and Industrial Research of the IMC attempted to organise a research project dedicated to the production and exchange of cultural films on an international scale. According to Merle Davis, on the advice of

F.P. Keppel, President of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the scope of the project was limited to the East African region with emphasis on motion pictures as a means of adult education. It was at this stage in the conception of the project which was to become known as Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment, that both Major L.A. Notcutt (rtd) and G.C. Latham, were introduced into the project (Davis, 1937: 9-13).

Before he was contacted, Major Notcutt, like some colonial government officials, e.g. William Sellers and A. Paterson, had, under the inspiration of the documentary film movement spearheaded by John Grierson at the Film Units of both the Empire Marketing Board (EMB), and the General Post Office (GPO), been experimenting with instructional films. In 1926, he was managing a group of sisal plantations in East Africa, and like many other planters, thought that an estate cinema might be an effective method of maintaining a contented labour force. Towards this end, he made a few films with Africans as actors and was surprised that they were well received. It then occurred to him that there might be commercial possibilities in the development of a native cinema. In 1930, he returned to England and spent some time studying film production. The idea of using the cinema as a means of instruction rather than commerce was however inspired after reading Julian Huxley's *African View* - a report of his pilot programme. In addition, a letter to *The Times* by Frank Melland, a former provincial commissioner in Northern Rhodesia, further encouraged Notcutt to look towards the direction of instructional cinema rather than commercial cinema. He worked out a scheme in rough details and discussed it with Melland who encouraged him, and linked him up with Merle Davis (Notcutt and Latham, 1937: 24).

In 1933, Notcutt received a letter from Davis asking for an estimate of the cost of a two-year experiment in the production of educational films for Africans. Subsequently, generous grants were made by the Carnegie Corporation of New York towards a project for experimenting in the production and exhibition of cultural, recreational, and educational films for Bantu people. This was how the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment - precursor to the instructional cinematic practices of the CFU, the Film and Photo Bureau, and the C.C.A.C.C. came into being. Other

financial contributors to the project included the Roan Antelope Copper Mines Ltd, Rhokana Corporation Ltd, and Mufulira Copper Mines Ltd. The experiment was originally planned to last for two years but when a professional cameraman was added to the staff in accordance with the expressed wish of the Colonial Office, it had to be scaled down. The project was conducted under the auspices of the Department of Social and Industrial Research of the IMC in conjunction with the Colonial Office and the British Film Institute. Frederick Luggard was appointed chairman of the Advisory Council of the project, which also included representatives of the principal British groups concerned with the welfare of the people of East Africa. Merle Davis was appointed director-general of the project, L.A. Notcutt as the field director, while G.C. Latham, a former director of Native Education in Northern Rhodesia, was appointed educational director.

The aims and objectives of the project as set out in the printed pamphlet issued on its launching, were to find out how best the cinema could be used for the following purposes:

- (1) To help the adult African to understand and adapt himself to the new conditions which are invading and threatening to overwhelm him.
- (2) To reinforce the ordinary methods of classroom and lecture hall.
- (3) To conserve what is best in African traditions and culture by representing these in their proper setting as stages in racial development and as inheritance to be cherished with pride.
- (4) To provide recreation and entertainment (Notcutt and Latham: 27-28).

Some of the films produced included, *Post Office Savings Bank*, *Tanga Travels*, *Tax*, *The Chief*, *The Hare and the Leopard*, *Food and Health*, *Hookworm*, *Ugandan Boys Scouts*, *Infant Malaria*, etc. The most popular of these films, *Post Office Savings Bank*, treats the issue of home-kept savings and theft. The film is about two plantation workers who return to their villages after receiving their pay. One buries his money in the floor of his hut, and is seen doing so by a thief who watches through a crack in the wall. In the evening, the man and his wife go to a dance, and the thief, noting their arrival there, sneaks back to the hut and steals the money. The next morning the man

looks at the place where he buried his money and, on discovering that it has been stolen, raises an alarm and informs his neighbours of the theft. One of them informs him that a stranger was seen early in the morning on his way to a nearby township. The man then sets off to the township with one of his neighbours who says he can identify the stranger. On arrival at the town, they meet his co-worker and the man tells him of the theft of his salary. His co-worker tells them how he guards his money from thieves, and takes them to the Post Office where the workings of the Savings Bank are explained to them. On returning through the town, they see the thief outside an Indian shop buying a shirt; as soon as he sees them, he takes to his heels, thereby giving himself away. A Hollywood style chase scene then follows, after which he is apprehended and brought to justice. The film therefore propagates the importance and safety of the Post Office Savings Bank. According to Notcutt and Latham, this film was shown more than seventy times, and was always one of the most popular films of the project (Notcutt and Latham: 31-34).

The Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment lasted between March 1935 and May 1937. Within this period, the team produced thirty-five films, which included nineteen on agriculture and six on health. A singular feature of the project was that the people who made the films also showed them throughout East and Central Africa. According to Rosaleen Smyth,

they were taken by Latham on lorry tours throughout East and Central Africa to test audience reactions. In five months he travelled nine thousand miles and gave ninety screenings to more than eighty thousand people, most of whom had never seen a film before (Smyth, 1983: 131).

The instructional cinema project, however faced a lot of criticisms because of the poor technical quality of the films. Latham had conceived an ambitious plan for a central organisation in London with local production units in the colonies, a structure later adopted by the CFU in 1939, but the East African governments were opposed to the institutionalisation of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment for financial reasons, and also because they felt the technical quality of the films was poor. There were complaints of imperfect synchronisation in the sound-on-disc technique adopted for the

project. Latham, however, argued that given the limited finance available and the fact that instructional cinema was still at an experimental stage, one could not be too much of a technical purist. Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) was the only colony that favoured the continuation of the project. It was more cinema conscious than other parts of black Africa because, as a result of the mine cinemas on the comparatively urbanised Copper Belt, it probably had then the largest concentration of African cinema-goers outside of South Africa.

Part of the explanation given for the termination of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment was lack of financial commitment by the Colonial Office. Until the outbreak of the Second World War, it was the policy of the British government that colonial governments should pay their own way. Colonial governments did not however particularly rate experimental instructional cinema as a top priority in the midst of more fundamental areas such as health, education, and agriculture. As a result of the criticism of the financial policy of the British government to its colonies, the Colonial Development Welfare Act of 1940 was passed in Parliament. One of the positive results of the criticism of the British government's colonial stewardship was that the Colonial Marketing Board (CMB) managed to find £4,175 to pay the Strand Film Company to produce a propaganda film, *Men of Africa* (Alexander Shaw, 1939). This film adopted the instructional format of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment in its depiction of the role of colonial governments in the development of the colonies. Smyth has noted that

the case of *Men of Africa* demonstrates that it is easier to find money for films in defence of the empire, to counter criticism of British neglect of the colonies, than it was to find money for films as an aid in imperial development (Smyth: 132).

This argument is further reinforced by the fact that when money was indeed found for the establishment of a Colonial Film Unit (CFU), it was in furtherance of British defence and war strategies rather than for educational purposes. As I noted earlier, when the Ministry of Information (MOI) established the CFU in 1939, to make and distribute war propaganda films in the colonies in aid of the British war efforts, there

was already a fairly thriving tradition of government officials using films to propagate government policies. Beside earlier efforts such as those of Sellers and Paterson, the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment had also further demonstrated the instructional and propaganda potentials of the medium. When the government decided to recruit staff for the take-off of the CFU, some of the veterans of instructional cinema such as William Sellers - who was appointed producer of the CFU - were drafted into war propaganda efforts (Jones, 1948: 4-8; Pearson, 1948: 23-27). The war propaganda films which the CFU was charged to produce were meant to counter the German war propaganda machine which represented Britain as a decadent and rapidly dwindling world power with a slave empire ruthlessly exploited and cruelly repressed (Richards and Aldgate, 1983: 247; Mackenzie, 1984: 74-75). The CFU films were therefore meant to correct these views as well as inform Africans why the war was being prosecuted, and why they should support British war efforts.

To achieve its set objectives, William Sellers and George Pearson, producer and artistic director of the CFU respectively, developed a specialised type of filmmaking which they considered suitable for illiterate people: the films should be slow in pace, avoid trick photography, leave nothing to be inferred, and pay special attention to continuity, the basic assumption being that the comprehension of films is a gradually acquired skill rather than a natural talent. Stating the fundamental stylistic principles of the CFU productions, Pearson in a paper titled "The Making of Films for Illiterates in Africa", presented at the 1948 British Film Institute conference on "The Film in Colonial Development", argues as follows:

we hold fast to two fundamental rules in our screencraft. First, to keep rigidly to those principles of education based on the laws of all human mental progress. In essence, that all acquired knowledge derives from experienced sensations, of which those of the eye are ever the strongest; that these myriad sensations are held in the memory, to form our thought material - our perceptions; that with these stored perceptions stimulated by imagination we can move to new mental comparisons and associations - our conceptions. From the known to the unknown. That is our constant touchstone in shaping pictorial choice and pictorial flow; realising always that all *present* thinking depends on *past* experience; knowing always that our vital task is the arousing of the imagination that functions between past apprehension and present comprehension (Pearson: 24).

Working from these fundamental stylistic assumptions, Pearson argues that the narrative style of modern cinema, with its brief scenes carrying the story forward, with all the time and space gaps covered by narrative conventions of mixes, wipes, montages, and fades, varying its scene form with dolly shots, pans, etc., confuse illiterate spectators. He recommends fades as the most appropriate narrative convention for indicating the passage of time, because the approach of darkness and dawn helps the illiterate spectator to understand the fade-out and fade-in as an indication of passage of time, of an ending or a new beginning. He also recommends the maintainance of visual continuity from scene to scene, and the avoidance of parrallel montages, so that the attention of the spectator is not distracted. As he puts it: "It is all a matter of using the very simplest ways of explaining something with our *pictures*, in the same manner that a good teacher speaks with the simplest *words* to his pupil eager for understanding" (Pearson: 25). Ordinarily, it would seem the fundamental stylistic principles of instructional cinema are very well suited to the set objective of using the film as a pedagogical instrument for social development, but a close scrutiny of the views of contributors at the conference, many of whom cite these production stylistics as keys to their arguments, reveals that they often use them as an approving stamp for the need to develop an alternative film aesthetics for Africans because they are inferior beings incapable of distinguishing between facts and fictions. Most of the arguments are often anchored on the imagined negative impact of commercial cinema on Africans. Instructional cinema was therefore seen as a way of redressing the negative images of Europeans projected in commercial cinema and the negative impact they were imagined to be having on Africans. The idea was to use British and selected American instructional films to counter Hollywood images of Europeans (Jones, 1948: 4-8; Beale, 1948: 16-21). The question which arises is, if Africans understand the narrative conventions of Hollywood productions, which after all established and canonised the narrative conventions of the cinema, why was it imagined that they would be confused when these same conventions are used in instructional films? In general, I do not see anything wrong with the production

stylistics which Pearson has enumerated because I consider them suitable for the nature of film practice they were aimed at. However when considered in conjunction with the views of earlier practitioner of instructional cinema such as those of Notcutt and Latham, and new interpretations attached to them outside their original framework by people like Jones and Beale, I am much more inclined to believe, in common with other African scholars, that the production stylistics of instructional cinema were not inspired by the altruistic set objectives of instructional cinema. I shall return to this point shortly.

By 1944, the total number of films carrying the CFU's label was 115 although not all were actually produced by the CFU. The Colonial Office which all this while played only an advisory role in the activity of the CFU, objected to the narrow concentration on war propaganda films and lobbied successfully to have the CFU's work extended to include the production of instructional films. To this end, in 1942, as the CFU widened its scope, funds and staff were increased, although the Treasury insisted that the main activity of the CFU should continue to be the production of war propaganda films. During the war period however, the Colonial Office continued to plan ahead for the post-war era when it expected that the CFU would concentrate on the production of instructional films. In anticipation of a drive for mass education to be launched after the war, with funds to be provided under the Colonial Development and Welfare Act, ACEC produced the report, *Mass Education in African Society* (1944), which acknowledged the cinema as the most popular and powerful of all visual aids in mass education. The report further advised that documentary films should be used to broaden the outlook of rural dwellers and help them to adjust to changes in the political, economic, and social conditions of their societies. The content of the report therefore had much in common with the aims and objectives of the Bantu Education Cinema Experiment launched almost a decade earlier.

The war propaganda films can be classified into three categories: war information films, exhortation and goodwill films, and the projection-of-England films. Most of the war information films carried titles like, *This is an Anti-Aircraft Gun*

(Pearson, 1941) or *This is a Barrage Balloon* (Pearson, 1941). Others were devoted to Africans fighting in the war, such as, *Pilot-Officer Peter Thomas, RAF* (Pearson, 1943), about a Nigerian who was the first African to qualify for a commission in the Royal Airforce during the colonial era. The majority of the war information films were geared towards explaining the mechanics of modern warfare. Others, such as, *Food from Oil Nuts* (Pearson, 1944) and *We Want Rubber* (Pearson, 1944), exhorted Africans to produce more rubber to help overcome the critical shortage of this commodity after the fall of Malaysia to the Japanese. On the other hand, films such as, *Comfort from Uganda* (Pearson, 1942) and *Katsina Tanks* (Pearson, 1943), were goodwill films made to show British appreciation for contributions made by the colonies towards the war efforts. The projection-of-England films, such as, *Mr English at Home* (Gordon Hales, 1940) and *A British Family in Peace and War* (Pearson, 1944), were films geared towards explaining English culture to Africans.

Towards the end of the war, as the clamour for independence grew louder in Africa, British colonial film policy was directed towards ensuring that the colonies stayed within the Commonwealth. The main objective was to persuade Africans that western democracy had more to offer them than communism. In this campaign, the weekly newsreel, *British News*, was considered invaluable, and news items were carefully selected for their informational, prestige, and trade promotional values. Throughout the war years, the CFU produced only war propaganda films, and they were mostly all directed by the veteran filmmaker, George Pearson. After the war however, the Central Office of Information (COI) replaced the MOI, and the CFU became a department of the COI under the controller of the Films Division. The COI had no policy making power, it was simply an agency whose function was to supply technical advice and facilities to ministerial departments. The film production policy of the CFU was therefore formulated by the Colonial Office. Consequently, in keeping with its post-war plans of laying emphasis on instructional cinema, the Colonial Office instructed the CFU to develop infrastructures in the colonies for the production of instructional films. Most of the post-war instructional films were directed by Lionel

Snazelle. They included *Toward True Democracy* (Snazelle, 1947), *Good Business* (Snazelle, 1947), which dealt with cocoa marketing co-operatives in Nigeria, *Village Development* (Snazelle, 1948), *Better Homes* (Snazelle, 1948), *Mixed Farming* (Snazelle, 1948), *Animal Manure* (Rollo Gamble, 1950), etc. As the titles indicate, most of the films were geared towards teaching Africans forms of popular democracy, village planning and development, modern methods of farming, etc.

To facilitate easy exhibition of its films, the CFU established in each colony, a Mobile Film Unit (MFU) which took these films on extensive exhibition tours of both rural and urban areas. The MFUs were first designed and operated in Nigeria before the system was extended to other British territories. The Central Office of Information (COI) bulletin, in its accounts of the origin of MFUs states as follows:

the first mobile cinemas - usually in improvised vans - were in use as long ago as 1929. It was in 1931 that the specially designed mobile cinema van was evolved in Nigeria, and since then the design has been steadily improved. Modern vehicles carry their own power-supply, are fitted for the projection of 16mm. films, silent or sound, and include film strip projectors, public address equipment and radio. The mobile cinema van is a many purpose vehicle, for according to the composition of its crew and programme, it becomes a mobile health centre, a veterinary centre, or a school for a literacy or agricultural improvement campaign (Central Office of Information (COI) Bulletin No. R. 3161, October, 1955: 10).

Once the popularity of this form of free cinema was established, itinerant salesmen began to exploit the system by setting up their own MFUs to promote sales of their merchandise. The salesmen's film exhibitions were often much more popular than those of the government's MFUs, because they showed mostly Hollywood westerns while the MFUs showed mostly non-fictional instructional films. However, through the combinatory efforts of both groups, a thriving film culture was firmly established throughout British colonial territories in Africa.

As the criticism of the British colonial government's stewardship grew louder after the war, government propagandists once more employed film - as they did earlier just before the outbreak of the war, in the case of *Men of Africa* - to defend the achievements of colonial rule. The product of this exercise was the widely acclaimed £30,000 dramatised documentary, *Daybreak in Udi* (Terry Bishop, 1948), which was

produced by the Crown Film Unit which is a different government agency from the CFU, to demonstrate the progress being made in the Udi division of Nigeria. *Daybreak in Udi*, is a classic example of an instructional film. It deals with the mass mobilisation undertaken by the people of the Udi division, under the supervision of their District Commissioner, E.R. Chadwick, who plays himself in the film, to develop the district. I will be undertaking a detailed analysis of this film shortly. The film won the 1948 Academy Award for documentary film, and a British award for documentary film in 1949.

Beside this brief intervention by the Crown Film Unit, the main objectives of the CFU in the post-war years, was the promotion of instructional film production in the colonies, whose governments, it hoped, would ultimately assume full financial and administrative responsibilities for the work in their respective territories. Toward this end, emphasis was placed on the decentralisation and Africanisation of the activities of the CFU. As part of this indigenisation process, the CFU branch set up in Nigeria in 1945, was renamed the Federal Film Unit in 1946; the Central Film Unit was set up to serve Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi) in 1948; and the Gold Coast (Ghana) Film Unit was established in 1945. Altogether, between 1945 and 1950, the CFU established twelve film production units in eight countries in East and West Africa. The units were mandated to make films on subject matters suggested by local territorial governments, and to train indigenous people in film production. To achieve this aim, a Film Training School was established in Accra, Ghana, in 1948. However, after the first six months, the Film Training School moved to Jamaica, and then back to London. By 1955, the CFU declared that it had fulfilled its goal of introducing instructional cinema to Africans. The CFU then changed its name to the Overseas Film and Television Centre, a place where Africans filmmakers, their counterparts from other former British colonies, and other Third World filmmakers could buy film equipment and undertake post-production activities (Smyth: 138-140; Mgbejume, 1989: 38-39).

The activities of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment and the CFU, inspired similar projects in the Belgian Congo (Zaire), where the Belgian Ministry of Information established a Film and Photo Bureau in 1947, to produce films specifically for the Congolese. The Chief of the Film and Photo Bureau felt that just distributing films from Europe and the United States would not meet the need of providing Africans with their own cinema. The Bureau's project therefore included the production of educational films for Africans as well as newsreels and documentaries about Africa for the Belgians. The films were shot with 16mm camera, and most of the post-production work, except for the laboratory processing of rushes, was done on the spot in the Belgian Congo. The Catholic Church in the territory, within this period, also became aware of the proselytisation potentials of the cinema. Accordingly, it established a film production centre called the Congolese Centre for Catholic Action Cinema (C.C.A.C.C.) headed by Father Alexandre Van den Heuvel. Under the C.C.A.C.C., three major film production companies were established in the Belgian Congo. Father Van den Heuvel was in charge of the Edisco-Films in Leopoldville (Kinshasa); Father Van Haelst managed Luluafilm production company in Luluabourg (Kanaga), in the western Kasai region; while Father De Vloo headed Africa Films in Bukavu and Kivu. The most popular instructional film produced by the C.C.A.C.C. was a series of animated colour cartoons called *Les Palabres de Mboloko*, directed by Father Van den Heuvel. In 1960, when Zaire became independent, both the C.C.A.C.C. and the Film and Photo Bureau stopped their African film production activities (Diawara, 1992: 2-11).

Many African film scholars such as Hyginus Ekwuazi (1987: 2-11), Onyero Mgbejume (1989: 1-16), Manthia Diawara (1986, 1992: 2-11), etc., have criticised the philosophy or general reasoning behind the institution of instructional cinema, especially as articulated by its practitioners. For instance, in their published report of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment, Notcutt and Latham gave the following reasons for the introduction of instructional cinema in Africa:

yet surely reflection will convince any unprejudiced person that, with backward peoples unable to distinguish between truth and falsehood, it is surely our wisdom, if not our obvious duty, to prevent, so far as is possible, the dissemination of wrong ideas. Should we stand by and see a distorted presentation of the white races accepted by millions of Africans when we have it in our power to show them the truth? There is much that is silly and sordid in the life of the West, but white people have other interests than money-making, gambling, crime and the pursuit of other people's wives and husbands (Notcutt and Latham: 22-23).

Most of the African scholars whom I noted have criticised the general reasoning behind the institution of instructional cinema in Africa, and have either cited the above views of Notcutt and Latham or similar views expressed by other practitioners, to argue that the whole project of instructional cinema, was motivated more by paternalistic attitude than by genuine altruism. For instance, other practitioners of instructional cinema such as William Sellers and George Pearson, producer and director respectively of the CFU, reasoned that Africans needed a specialised, simplistic, kind of filmmaking that is slow in pace, avoids trick photography, etc. Van Bever, head of the Film and Photo Bureau in the Belgian Congo, also argued along similar lines when he stated as follows:

for the great majority of Africans it would be necessary to film with a special technique. We must, therefore, make, ourselves, the largest share of films destined for Africans (cited in Diawara, 1992: 13).

But while the practitioners reasoned that Africans were incapable of distinguishing between "truth and falsehood", and that they needed a special simplified cinema, Africans themselves, with their wealth of storytelling traditions, were giving their verdict on instructional cinema by showing preference for commercial entertainment films whose stock in trade is the peddling of what Biodun Jeyifo elsewhere refers to as "the truthful lie" (Jeyifo, 1985). Indeed, a cursory look at the few instructional films that were popular such as, *The Post Office Savings Bank*, *Les Palabres de Mboloko*, and *The Boy Kumasenu*, would reveal that they lean more towards feature films than to documentary. Furthermore, in 1958, Sellers himself, told a conference in Brussels on the cinema in sub-saharan Africa that although the CFU's films were of technical and pictorial quality, many aroused little emotional interest among rural audiences. He recommended that more feature films with African subjects, directed by

Africans themselves should be encouraged (Smyth: 138). A year earlier, in 1957, Kehinde Vaughan had similarly attested to the unpopularity of instructional cinema and its special simplified narrative techniques when he argued that

Africans film audiences, daily growing larger, when faced with the choice of seeing the "simplified screen narratives" produced by the "Colonial Film Unit" and the foreign "commercial entertainment film" have overwhelmingly decided in favour of the latter products in spite of their "complicated technical conventions". In African towns like Freetown, Accra, Kumasi, Lagos or Nairobi, Charles Chaplin and many popular stars of the screen are already household names (cited in Diawara, 1992: 4).

Manthia Diawara, in his assessment of the instructional cinematic practices of the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment, and the CFU, draws the conclusion that the whole enterprise was driven by paternalistic attitude rather than by altruistic aspirations. In his opinion,

the Bantu Cinema Experiment and the Colonial Film Unit were in many ways paternalistic and racist. They wanted to turn back film history and develop a different type of cinema for Africans because they considered the African mind too primitive to follow the sophisticated narrative techniques of mainstream cinema. Thus they thought it necessary to return to the beginning of the film history - to use uncut scenes, slow down the story's pace, make the narrative simpler by using fewer actors and adhering to just one dominant theme. The ideology of these units denied that the colonised peoples had elementary human qualities (Diawara: 4).

Though I hold similar opinion to those expressed by the African scholars with respect to qualifying the views of the practitioners of instructional cinema as paternalistic, still, I should like to argue that these views should be distinguished from both the stated aims and objectives of instructional cinema, and from the films themselves. The stated aims and objectives were to teach Africans modern methods of social development, hence the emphasis on film as a teaching aid, on modern medicine, modern methods of farming, banking, village and urban planning for hygienic purposes, co-operative societies, etc. The films do not represent Africans as lacking knowledge of these things; they merely posit them as doing things in the old and traditional ways. As I shall shortly demonstrate in my analysis of *Men of Africa* and *Daybreak in Udi*, instructional cinema represents Africans as knowing and knowledgeable people, able

and willing to adopt modern methods of social planning and development for the benefit of their communities.

The representation of African subjectivities in instructional cinema as knowing and knowledgeable beings, as people with independent mind of their own capable of making decisions about what they want, and most importantly, as people capable of acquiring knowledge to improve themselves, is antithetical to the practice of colonialist African cinema which represents Africans by drawing analogies between them and animals, either by showing them as people who are bestial in behaviour or as people incapable of social development. As a result of the progressive manner in which Africans are posited in instructional cinema, the practice needs to be distinguished from colonialist African cinema. However, the line between instruction and propaganda is indeed very thin with respect to these category of films. The reason for this can be traced more to the political atmosphere within which they were produced and how they were perceived by people both in the colonies and in the metropolis, than in the nature of the representation. Most of the films were produced, as I noted earlier, in the heat of post-war criticism of British colonial stewardship. In the colonies, the post-war period witnessed a period of intense demand and movement for independence. These demands, rather than being accepted as an indication of a growing wish for self-rule, were often interpreted as sign of dissatisfaction with the level of development within the colonies. The period therefore witnessed the initiation of various development projects, many having to do with the building of infrastructures, schools, hospitals, the development of the agricultural sector of the economy, etc. In pursuing these development projects, the cinema was perceived as a facilitator, a means of orienting and demonstrating to the people within the colonies, a new and modern way of doing things. The proceedings of the 1948 conference on the cinema and colonial development clearly demonstrate that colonial governments saw the cinema as an aid to the propagation of developmental projects such as health and environmental sanitation programmes, agricultural extension services, public information network, etc. But before this time also, the production of colonialist

African films such as *Sanders of the River*, *Song of Freedom*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *She*, etc., was already going on in the colonies and because of the images projected in these films, there was a growing hostility to the way the cinema was being used, in general, in the colonies. For instance, in his response to the release of *Sanders of the River*, Nnamdi Azikiwe, one of the nationalist politicians of the day, noted that

Sanders of the River may reach African shores for reproduction on screen. Whoever sees this picture will be shocked at the exaggeration of African mentality, so far as superstitious beliefs are concerned, not to speak of the knavery and chicanery of some African chiefs. I feel that what is being paraded in the world today as art or literature is nothing short of propaganda (Azikiwe, 1968: 154-155).

Similar views were often extended to instructional cinema for different reasons. Many of the critics whom I have cited used the paternalistic views of the producers of instructional cinema to judge the films. To them, it is not so much a question of the very *nature and purpose* of the films themselves as of the views of their producers. Using these views, they condemn the narrative styles in these films as simplistic. But when one takes a closer look at films like *Men of Africa* and *Daybreak in Udi*, as examples of colonial African instructional cinema, one finds that they are not more simplistic in narrative than most films of the period. Besides, the *purpose* for which they were made is often overlooked. Others considered them uninteresting because of the emphasis on documentary practice. They would have preferred striking a balance between fictional narratives and documentary films. To the emergent political élites on the other hand, little distinction was made between these films and the commercial ones. While the commercial ones were condemned for their negative representation of Africa, the instructional films were either treated as continuing the practice of colonialist African cinema or as colonial government propaganda. The lack of distinction between colonial African instructional cinema and colonialist African cinema which one finds in the works of most historians and critics of African cinema, is therefore a product of the politics of interpretation of both colonial governments' intentions and the views of the practitioners of instructional cinema, on the one hand, and of the vexatious practice of colonialist African cinema on the other. While colonial

governments considered the CFU productions as instructional films, the emergent political elites of the time as well as most post-colonial African film historians considered them as propaganda pieces. Certainly, most of these films would have been packaged for the metropolis as informational/instructional works showing the role of the British colonial governments in the development of the colonies. But taking cognisance of the criticism preceding the enactment of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 and the subsequent institution of the practice of instructional cinema, it is indeed difficult to draw a strict line between propaganda and instruction in these films. If I am considering them here strictly as instructional films, then it is because I am much more concerned with the *nature and purpose* of these films, with respect to the representation of African subjectivity and culture, than with the politics underlining their production. In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall be carrying out a critical reading of *Men of Africa* and *Daybreak in Udi*. Though the two films were addressed specifically to British spectators, as evidence of the British colonial government's commitment to the development of its African colonies, *Daybreak in Udi*, was widely shown in Nigeria as an instructional film in aid of community self-help development.

4.2 A Critical Reading Of *Men of Africa* and *Daybreak in Udi*.

4.2.1 *Men of Africa*.

Men of Africa (Alexander Shaw, 1939) is an instructional film produced by the Strand Film Company for the Empire Marketing Board (EMB), just before the outbreak of the Second World War, to demonstrate the role of British colonial rule in the development of the British East African territories of Kenya, Uganda, and the mandated territory of Tanganyika. The film uses a lot of materials from archival holdings on various parts of the British Empire, as well as actual location shooting, to show the role of colonial rule in the development of the colonies, with special emphasis on colonial development in East Africa. There are eleven main sequences in the film, with scenes dealing with various phases and institutions of British colonial administration. Essentially, the film is

structured around the theme of development and British agencies responsible for the development of the colonies. *Men of Africa* is a loosely structured film with its disparate sequences focusing on either a British colonial government agency responsible for development in the colonies or various phases of development, united by the theme of development. The film uses a combination of voice-over narration and illustrative spatial representation to reinforce what is being shown. As the narrator gives verbal descriptions or information about a government development agency or aspect of development projects, shots of scenes related to what is being said are shown to reinforce it. However, the film is not focused on individual subjects but on aspects and institutions of colonial development. In representing the scenarios of development, the contributions of Africans and British colonial administrators to the development of the region under focus are foregrounded, and in this respect, one can make general judgements regarding the nature of African subjectivity projected in the film. In reading the film, I shall be paying particular attention to narrative details within each sequence with a view to analysing the image of African subjectivity and culture that emerges in the sequence, and the relevance of this to the overall theme of development in the film.

The first sequence is an introductory exposé on the range and magnitude of the British Empire. It begins with an animated map of the world with arrows indicating the locations of British colonies around the world. This is accompanied by a voice-over narrator (Leslie Mitchell) informing us that the British Colonial Empire is made up of two million, five hundred thousand square miles, and that it stretches from the Antarctic to the Tropics, with dependencies in every continent and every ocean. We are further told that the people of Britain are directly responsible for the well being of the colonies, and that there are about sixteen million people in them, made up of men, women, and children of every race, colour and creed, with a hundred different languages and hundreds of different cultures and ways of living. We are also told that to try and develop this large empire is not an easy task. At this point, scenes from various parts of the empire are used to illustrate the range of the empire, its peoples and cultures, physical geography, and state of development.

This exposé begins in the Far East with a long shot of a street scene in Hong Kong. This is followed by several other scenes, all dealing with the cosmopolitan nature of the colony. Next, there is cut to several scenes from the Fiji Islands, Malaysia and Ceylon, all dealing with aspects of development, geographical outlook, culture, occupation, etc. From the Far Eastern colonies, the film shifts to Africa which we are told by the narrator, is the home of more primitive people. To illustrate this primitivism, a scene of two brawny men paddling a canoe is shown. But since scenes from Ceylon and the Fiji Islands do not include any evidence of the sort of modern development associated with Hong Kong or Malaysia, and since they were not for this reason qualified as primitive people, the primitivism associated with Africa in this instance can only be read as product of the already existing historical practice in colonialist African discourse, in qualifying anything African as primitive and savage. From Africa, the film switches to the Mediterranean where we are told that tiny Palestine is disputed by Jews and Arabs. This information is accompanied by a short pan of an open country scene to illustrate the aridity of the land in disputation. Next, the narrator takes us to Gibraltar and Malta which we are told are homes to British Naval bases that guard the shortest route to the Far East. Three scenes are used to illustrate the importance of these territories. The first begins with a shot of a cliffside overlooking the sea, followed by a cut to the deck of a frigate with its mounted guns, and lastly, a shot of a war ship on flag parade. From the Mediterranean, the narrator takes us to the Caribbean Islands of Bermuda and the Bahamas. This region is illustrated by women carrying bunches of bananas from the plantation. This is followed by a cut to mainland South America, where the focus is on the British territories of Honduras and Guyana. The region is illustrated by a shot of a market scene with women selling bananas, oranges, pineapples, etc., in huge baskets, followed by a typical street scene with donkey-drawn carts.

While the first sequence is a general introductory exposé on the range and magnitude of the empire, the second, third and fourth sequences, focus on the role of British institutions like the Colonial Office, the Imperial Institute, and the Imperial

College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad, in the administration of the empire. In the second sequence, for instance, we are told by the narrator that control of the colonies is carried out by the Colonial Office. This information is accompanied by a downward crane shot of the massive Colonial Office building, resting on the wall plaque "Colonial Office". Next, we are told by the narrator that it is here that all major decisions affecting the empire are taken. A cut from the wall plaque is followed by interior shots of the office corridors, followed by cuts to individual offices and officers. Next, there is a cut to a close-up of a map of West Africa, followed by a shot of the West African desk, and a close-up of file covers on the desk, the first of which deals with general medical matters. The scenes showing the nature of interior office arrangements within the Colonial Office are followed by an introduction to standard procedures in colonial administration: a member of parliament phones to ask the Secretary of State for the Colonies whether he is satisfied with the standard of nutrition of the people of the British West African territories. In answer to this question, there is a cut to an establishing shot of a village scene in West Africa. This is followed by a cut to a long shot of a clustered rundown street filled with mud huts and children. Next, there is a cut to a close-up of two boys lying on a huge rock smiling, their plump faces indicating good nourishment. As the parliamentarian and the Secretary of State exchange views, the alternation of the scenes continues. The shot of the two well nourished boys is followed by a cut to a pan of a field with grazing cattle and a shot of a women's adult literacy/cooking class holding in the open air. Towards the end of the sequence, the narrator picks up the narration by informing us that a special committee advises on grants and money for development and research in all parts of the empire. This summarising statement resting on research and development, is used to introduce the role of the Imperial Institute in colonial development. But already, within what is shown in the scenes from West Africa, the developmental and instructional emphasis of the film can be noted, especially in the women adult literacy/cooking class. This developmental emphasis will be fully exploited later in the film.

The next sequence focuses on the role of the Imperial Institute in colonial development. It begins with the narrator informing us that the Imperial Institute helps the colonies to improve the quality of their exports. This information is accompanied by a downward crane shot of the Imperial Institute building, followed by a cut to a scientist working in a laboratory, and another cut to a harbour scene with a docking ship. We are told by the narrator that the man is working on the best sort of paper which can be produced from Malayan wood, and that the ship in the harbour is the *Discovery II*, a research vessel. Furthermore, that it is the world's best equipped research vessel, and that it has just returned from a voyage around the Antarctic Ice head with information on how to help the whaling industry. The information on the research vessel is followed by a cut to the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, part of the Imperial Institute. The focus on the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine begins with a short pan of the building complex, followed by a cut to busy office scenes with research officials. This is accompanied by the narrator informing us that the Bureau of Tropical Hygiene collects reports from all over the world, attends to them, and formulates policies related to the development of the colonies, and that the work of one scientist or doctor in one part of the tropics in the empire comes quickly to his fellow research-worker in other parts through the services of the Bureau of Tropical Hygiene. This information is illustrated by a cut from the scientists at the Bureau to an out-station in Entebbe, Uganda. We are told that research stations on the spot such as that at Entebbe regularly send samples of tsetse fly pupas by airmail from Africa to the Wellcome Institute so that long range experiments can be carried out on the control of tsetse fly and the disease it carries, sleeping sickness. This bit of information is illustrated by shots of research workers packaging pupas, stamping the packages, and loading them into mail vans. This is followed by a cut to the Wellcome Institute in London. The cut to the scientists at the Wellcome Institute ends the sequence on the role of the Imperial Institute in colonial development.

What is of importance in this sequence is that we are shown young African scientists and research assistance working in cooperation with other scientists from other parts of the empire in scientific and development oriented projects. This image stands in contrast to that projected in the opening sequence where we are told that Africa is the continent of more primitive people. Far from sustaining the earlier image of primitivism, what we are being introduced to here is the discourse of progress and development which the earlier statement denies. For instance, the image that stands out in the scenes relating research activities at Entebbe, is that which projects Africa as a developing continent and Africans, like people from other colonised continents, as people struggling to contribute to the development of their communities. It is this progress and development-oriented discourse that colonialist African discourse also seek to deny when it projects the image of Africa as a continent of primitive and savage people. Even though *Men of Africa* occasionally slips into colonialist discourse as the opening sequence shows, it is never sustained probably because of its development and progress oriented discourse.

The next sequence which deals with the contributions to colonial development of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad, begins with a long aerial shot of tropical vegetation, followed by a cut to birds flying, and another of two men wearing matted coconut leaf hats looking at a coconut tree. These opening shots are followed by the narrator informing us that Trinidad, with its tropical climate and typical conditions, made Britain establish the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture there to carry out research into problems of plant diseases and soil fertility. This information is followed by a shot of the college compound. Next, there is a cut to a group of British students cutting and examining cocoa buds, and to a lone student using pins to note on a map of the world places where samples are taken. As these activities are going on, the narrator informs us that these workers are students from all over the empire, and that they are receiving practical training which will help them provide solutions to agricultural problems in their territories. This information is followed by a cut to a group of students in a tobacco farm, some examining the

tobacco leaves, others resting. Next, there is a cut to a shot of a classroom scene in session. The narrator intervenes by informing us that training is a vital factor in Britain's plan for the colonies, and that emphasis is placed on agriculture, hygiene, medicine, and teaching; furthermore, that the success of Britain's colonial policies depends finally on the men and women administrators, doctors, agricultural officers, and teachers executing the policies. This information is followed by a pan of the classroom, leading to a laboratory scene showing another group of students carrying out laboratory tests. The sequence ends with the transition of the pan to a dolly into the laboratory, accompanied by a flurry of uplifting atmospheric music.

After these three sequences dedicated to highlighting the activities of British institutions responsible for the administration of the empire, the film switches to a case study of colonial development in East Africa. At the level of narration, this switch is effected by a cut to the opening animated map of the world with arrows showing the location of British colonies, ending with a zoom into the East African countries of Kenya, Uganda, and the mandated territory of Tanganyika. This focus is followed by the narrator informing us that British East Africa is made up of the Kenyan colony, the mandated territory of Tanganyika, and the protectorate of Uganda, an area of 700,000 square miles, with a population of 12 million Africans. This information is followed by an opening long pan of the Kenyan countryside, accompanied by traditional xylophone music, to indicate the Africanness of the environment. The long pan ends by revealing Masai cattle rearers tending their cattle in open country. Next, there is a cut to a shot of an elderly Masai man, followed by a cut to several men and their cattle, and a pan of open grassland. The narrator informs us amidst these camera movements that the Kenyans are a people who live by the soil, that some tribes such as the Macamba and the Masai herd their cattle on the plains, while others such as the Luo and the Kikuyu are farmers. This is accompanied by a cut from the open grassland to a shot of a woman and a young girl, possibly a mother and her daughter, weeding in a farm. Next, there is a cut to a market scene, and a pan of men sitting in the shades of trees within the market, whiling away their time. The pan ends the scene with women selling fresh

milk. The opening scenes of this sequence introduces spectator to the geographical outlook, ethnic configuration and main occupation of people of this region.

Next, the narrator informs us that this simple life under the harsh African sky was once a life of fear and uncertainty, and that hostile tribes ravaged their neighbour's villages and cattles. This is illustrated by a cut to a close-up of a night camp-fire, and a shot of a group of Masai warriors gathered together around the camp-fire in preparation for an inter-ethnic war. In terms of narration, this historical retrospective sequence begins with a cut to a close-up of the fire, another of the stamping feet of the warriors in a war dance, a shot of their swaying torsos, and a close-up pan along their faces. From the pan, the camera switches to a shot of several rows of dancing warriors, back to a close-up of their faces, and a close-up punctuation of an individual warrior's face. These elaborate camera movements climax with a shot of the side view of a single file of warriors dancing in a jumping formation, facing first the left-hand side of the screen, and then, the right-hand side. This dance is followed by a close-up of the faces of three of the warriors, a medium close-up of the face of a single dancing warrior, a shot of a single warrior dancing in a jumping formation in front of the camera, a side view of a single warrior in the same dancing formation facing the left-hand side of the screen, and then, right. Lastly, there is a shot of several rows of warriors dancing in the same jumping formation, followed by a fade. These dance movements, accompanied by humming and stamping of feet, with an occasional cut to the fire, metaphorically signify the stoking of the flame of inter-ethnic warfare. The use of medium close-ups and close-ups in this sequence, and similar ones in other sequences, are not intended as aspects of character detailing and development or character accessibility. They are used here as forms of spatial illustration of narrative action, specifically to dramatise the Masai ritual war dance.

The fade is followed by a shot of a scene of a group of women carrying firewood on their backs with a belt strapped to their head, returning from farm. This is followed by a cut to a short pan of the women, and a shot of cattle entering a compound with several mud huts. This is a typical Masai village. Next, there is a brief

pan of the roofs of the huts made of banana leaves, and a shot of a lone, desolate woman, sitting on the bare ground in front of a hut with a hen clucking behind her. The narrator informs us that British rule has brought peace but that there is still a long battle to be fought against poverty, ignorance and disease. Furthermore, that the squalor of the villages and the lack of proper food still make their communities easy victims to the diseases of the tropics. These, we are told, are the problems Britain is trying to solve in East Africa. The squalor of the Masai village, signified by the rotting banana leafroofed huts and the lone desolate woman sitting on the bare ground in front of a hut, is followed by a brief pan of a model village in construction. The roofs of the new village are constructed first, with tightly matted branches of trees, and then plastered with mud. This scene also ends the fifth sequence which deals with British colonial development efforts at the village level. The historical retrospective nature of this sequence can be considered a form of narrative flashback aimed at propagating the necessity for the present British colonial rule - which is represented through the current construction of the model village - as the main force behind peace among the hitherto warring ethnic groups and the new methods of village planning and development.

From village development efforts, the film switches focus to urban planning and development, with the narrator informing us that in these lands, there are so many changes to be made, that much can be achieved by money and the initiative of the white man, and that rivers are already being harnested to bring electricity to urban areas, and harbours and docks are already being built in Mombasa to open up the town. We are also told that elsewhere in the country, bridges, new roads and railways are being built to open up districts long cut off from the rest of the country. The sequence on urban development begins with a pan of a building site with several rows of partially completed modern flats. This is followed by a cut to a shot of a power station, a sub-transmitting station, a harbour scene with several ocean liners, a car entering a bridge, and a shot of the bridge. All these scenes illustrate ongoing phases of development. From urban development, the film switches to health care services with

the narrator observing that a good medical service is essential for development, that medical services at urban hospitals and village dispensaries have been steadily expanding and that minor injuries are treated in out-patient departments by native dressers, while serious ones are handled by well equipped hospitals. We are further told that as a result of the success in health care, the fear and suspicion of the whiteman's health services are rapidly breaking down.

The sequence on health care services begins with a focus on a village dispensary. The opening scene begins with a shot of a male village dispenser coming out of a dispensary. This is followed by a cut to a pan of a group of patients, mostly men, sitting on benches in front of the dispensary. A boy who is at the front of the queue is called into the consulting/treatment room by the dispenser. As they move in, there is a cut to a hospital scene. This opens with shots of a consulting room, a ward full of patients in bed, and several other patients outside in beds, in the shade of tree. This is followed by a shot of the exterior of a maternity ward, with several mothers, their babies, and expectant mothers sitting on the lawn in front of it, waiting for treatment. The narrator intervenes into the unfolding scenes by informing us that the testimonies of mothers who use medical services like those offered by hospitals have been helpful in dispelling suspicion about modern health care, and that in Kenya, one in every twenty-four women have their babies in hospitals and in the Kiambu district where the hospital in focus is, the figure is as high as one in every five women. This information is followed by a cut from the women sitting in front of the hospital, to a nurse carrying a newly born baby, a group of little children playing within the hospital ground, and a close-up of a child excreting into a potty. What is interesting in both sequences is that, as in the earlier ones, we find educated Africans, including engineers, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, etc., at work, contributing to the development of their communities, and the image that comes out of such scenarios is that of a dynamic society with a progressive outlook.

From the health sector, the film switches to environmental sanitation programmes with emphasis on insect-borne diseases. This begins with the narrator

informing us that the anopheles, the malaria mosquito, enemy of health and progress in Africa, is at last meeting defeat at the hands of modern science, that health departments collect the larvae of mosquitoes from their breeding spaces for laboratory study, and that breeding lands are sprayed with paraffin and heavy oil which destroys the mosquito larvae before they hatch. This information is illustrated with shots of mosquito specimens in cages, a man collecting larvae from a pool, and a laboratory attendant labelling the specimens for post. This is followed by a cut to two men, with spraying equipment strapped to their backs, spraying stagnant pools of water. We are further told that mosquitoes have made large areas of rich lands uninhabitable, and that at Kisumu, the Papara swamps are being reclaimed. This is followed by a shot of the Papara swamps, and a series of shots of half-naked workmen cutting into the roots of the swamp shoots, upturning them, and dragging them to high ground. Others then fill the muddy waters with rocks. From the mosquito menace, the focus switches to the tsetse fly and sleeping sickness, with the narrator informing us that the tsetse fly, the insect responsible for the spread of sleeping sickness, infects nearly the whole of tropical Africa, and that it kills the cattle upon which many tribes depend for their living, besides spreading the deadly disease, among the population. We are told that two-third of Tanganyika cannot be inhabited because of the tsetse fly but that scientists are already studying its habits and movements in order to find ways of controlling its spread. This information is followed by a pan of a tsetse fly infested forest, followed by a cut to a tsetse fly perching on a whiteman's arm, and a cut to a group of white scientists and their African assistants collecting specimens with hand-held loop nets. As these activities are going on, the narrator informs us that there are twenty-one varieties of tsetse fly in East Africa, and that each is given a detailed study. Furthermore, in twenty-six years, sleeping sickness has almost been wiped out in British East Africa. This is followed by a cut to an inoculation scene, a shot of a group of people arriving in canoes for medical inspection and inoculation, and a group of women and children sitting in a field waiting to be inoculated. The narrator informs us that these people are the Baganda of Uganda who have been summoned by their chief to one of the frequent

medical inspections, that most Africans suffer from malnutrition, and that, sometimes, they either do not have enough food, lack the right type of food, or do not eat properly the food they have. As a result, we are told that many Africans are not strong enough to resist diseases, and that malnutrition is a basic problem to all doctors in Africa. The sequence on health and medical care ends with a group of children being registered, inspected, and inoculated.

The eighth sequence focuses on modern methods of farming and marketing of farm produce. The government officials whose activities are highlighted in this sequence include veterinary officers and agricultural extension workers/officers. The sequence begins with a brief pan of a demonstration farm with several farmers and agricultural officers. This is accompanied by the narrator informing us that the farmers are being taught how to manure their crops, engage in mixed cropping, live stock and cash crop farms. In addition, that they are also encouraged to form farmer's cooperatives through which they can market their farm produce at better bargains. This information is followed by a shot of weighing tables for graded coffee, and a shot of a market scene with various grades and types of potatoes on display. Next, the narrator informs us that Masai cattle rearers are being taught modern ways of drying their hides and skins, and that they are also encouraged to inoculate their herds of cattle as well as taught to shift their cattle from one grazing ground to another more often, to combat the problem of over-grazed lands. To illustrate this point, scenes of cattle inoculation are intercut with those of cattle dipping and an over-grazed land. The problem of soil erosion and how it is being tackled is also highlighted. The sequence ends with a shot of cattle grazing in a field.

The ninth sequence focuses on the contributions of colonial educational institutions to the development of the British East African territories. The sequence, which begins with a shot of school children learning in the shade of a tree, is accompanied by traditional African xylophone music. A slow pan of the scene reveals several sets of classes being taught by black female teachers under the supervision of a white missionary headmistress. This is followed by cuts to other scenes with children

reading and writing or singing happily to express the joy of learning, and children being taught how to bathe themselves properly. At this point, the narrator intervenes by observing that education must be related to the practical needs of Africa, that at Makerere College - then a college of the University of London - doctors, engineers, teachers, nurses, etc., are undergoing training, and that they will be leaders of the new Africa, combining the best in their tradition with that of the West. This information is illustrated with a campus scene at Makerere College, intercut with a broadcast by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in which he proclaims that a new world is coming into being in Africa. This proclamation is followed by scenes of construction sites, followed by Africans working in a railway workshop. At this point, the narrator intervenes to inform us that the railway workshop technicians in Nairobi are as skilled as their counterparts anywhere in the world. A cut from the technicians is followed by a shot of a railway locomotive engine travelling by pulleys to the repair workshop, and a shot of a technician welding part of an engine. The sequence ends with a cut to a shot of a football match between two secondary schools, with boy scouts keeping order at the match ground.

The tenth sequence focuses attention on the development of democratic institutions in colonial East Africa. It begins with the narrator informing us that the role of democracy in social development is being emphasised, and that, to this end, there has been delegation of authority to the heads of local tribes. This information is accompanied by a cut to a shot of a traditional council in session, with a district officer in attendance. This is followed by scenes of tax collectors performing their duties, and a native court in session. The narrator informs us that the Lukiko of Uganda have even formed their own local parliament with an elected speaker. As illustration, scenes of Lukiko parliamentarians wearing jackets over traditional outfits of *wrapper*, with top hats, and walking sticks to match, on their way to parliament, are intercut with a scenes of the local parliament in session, and the British parliament in session in London upon which it is structured. Also highlighted in this sequence is the role of the modern communication system in the transmission of information.

The film climaxes in the eleventh sequence with a focus on an Empire Day celebration with a huge funfair where various departments of government exhibit and demonstrate models of their services. The celebration, which is attended by the resident governor of the territory, begins with parades by a detachment of the local constabulary, traditional dances by colourfully dressed women, parades by school children, etc., with the governor taking the salute. On display at the funfair are model huts and houses, and demonstrations of how to build them, a model bed with fitted mosquito nets, soil erosion and control methods, a demonstration of the importance of vegetables to a balanced diet, nutrition problems and their solutions, etc. Each of the departments have assistants soliciting the attention of spectators, and demonstrating their services. This climactic sequence therefore summarises in a microcosm, the various services rendered by the British colonial government in East Africa. The film ends with a cut from the Empire Day funfair to a pan of a tropical forest, open fields and farms. The narrator summarises the events by stating that the drive for change and modern development should be matched by a preservation of the good ways of old Africa.

What is of great interest to me in this film, is the balanced and objective way in which African subjectivity is constructed textually. At the time the film was made, a lot of developmental programmes had already been initiated in various part of the continent. These include the establishment of primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary institutions. The building of modern infastructures such as roads, railway, airports, harbours, etc., were also in progress in various parts of the continent. The film acknowledges all these ongoing developmental programmes in the region on which it focuses. The foregrounding of this sort of progress and development oriented discourse is one of the elements which distinguishes colonial African instructional cinema from colonialist African cinema. The other is the constitution of African subjectivity as a knowing and knowledgeable beings capable of self-initiative and self-development. In *Men of Africa*, Africans are not merely positioned as objects of ethnographic and specular interest; rather, they are positioned as conscious agents and

subjects in action, contributing to the development of their communities. This kind of development and progress oriented discourse is suppressed in films of colonialist African cinema. When one watches films like *Sanders of the River*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Song of Freeddom*, *She*, etc., the impression one gets is that there were no ongoing development projects at the time they were made, save the business of exploration and colonial conquest. But as a matter of fact, at that time, the business of colonial conquest had been concluded more than three decades earlier. The denial of development which one notices in colonialist African cinema is therefore both an exercise in the legitimation of colonial authority as well as the legacy of an already existing canon of colonialist discourse. It is as if to say that to represent a progressive outlook of Africans is to acknowledge their humanity. This is where films of colonial African instructional cinema are different. Though in the opening sequence of *Men of Africa* we are informed by the voice-over narrator that Africa is a continent of more primitive people, the overall picture of Africa and Africans that comes across in the film itself is one of a developing continent and of a progressive people contributing to the development of their society. In the third sequence of the film, for instance, this progressive outlook is highlighted during the focus on the activities of the Imperial Institute. In one of the scenes, a cut from British scientists working at the Bureau of Tropical Hygiene in London is followed by that of African research assistants working in a research out-station in Entebbe. In addition, from the fifth sequence onwards, when the film shifts its focus to East Africa, there is a gradual build up of a picture of a society in transition from traditionality to modernity, with Africans effectively positioned as agents of development. The point is of course made that African agricultural extension workers/ officers, veterinary officers, teachers, medical doctors, nurses, engineers, etc., were trained by British institutions and educators, but the latter figure sparingly in the execution of their duties.

The model Masai village is built by African workers, the spraying of the mosquito breeding stagnant pools is carried out by them, and the railway workshop technicians of Nairobi whom we are told are as skilled as their counterparts anywhere

in the world, are all Africans working alone without a British supervisor. There are African doctors, nurses, teachers, etc., either working alone or under the supervision of their superior British officers. Most importantly, the role of education in colonial development is greatly emphasised in the film. We encounter scenes of primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions in session, with Makerere College given special mention. The overall picture which one gets in this film of Africa and Africans is therefore one which positions African as knowing and knowledgeable agents of development. Africans are also positioned as people capable of handling their own affairs in the absence of colonial authority. In fact, the sequence which focuses on the development of democratic institutions in Africa stresses the point that Africans are being prepared for self-governance. This is something that one hardly encounters in colonialist African cinema which is preoccupied with the perpetual degeneration of Africans into a state of barbarism at the slightest absence of colonial authority, as in the case of *Sanders of the River*.

In sum, *Men of Africa*, is an instructional film released just before the outbreak of the Second World War to demonstrate the role of British colonial rule in the development of East Africa. The film does not romanticise Africans under colonial rule, nor does it represent them as degenerate primitive people incapable of self-development. It represents them as progressive people struggling under colonial rule to develop their society. Furthermore, the society represented in *Men of Africa*, is a dynamic one in a state of transition from traditionality to modernity. In this regard, the experience of Africans was not too different from that of colonised peoples elsewhere in the world in the period under review. Finally, even though the title, *Men of Africa*, seems to suggest erroneously that it is the activities of only men of Africa that is highlighted in the film, the actual text itself does not foreground gender politics by giving preferential spatial treatment to either of the sexes. The men in the title is therefore a neuter subject term arising from the authority of patriarchy in British colonial government. However, where gender politics does occasionally figure in the text, as in cases of separate sitting positions of men and women in seating

arrangements within scenes, its roots can be traced to the patriarchal separation of male/female space in traditional African society. Genderisation of public space figures prominently in *Daybreak in Udi* which I shall be analysing shortly.

4.2.2 *Daybreak in Udi*.

Daybreak in Udi (Terry Bishop, 1949) was produced to demonstrate the role of the British colonial government in the development of the colonies, with specific reference to Nigeria. It was produced by the Crown Film Unit after the Second World War, in response to the growing criticism of the British government's stewardship in the colonies. The film is a dramatised documentary of the self-help development programmes embarked upon by the people of Umana village in the Udi District of Nigeria with the support and encouragement of the District Officer, E.R. Chadwick. It sets out to propagate the concept of community self-help development, supported by government. The implicit argument underlying the film is that the British colonial government alone cannot serve as agent of development, that development must be a joint community/government effort. As a propaganda piece, the film seems to respond to the critics of the British colonial government's stewardship in Africa by arguing that development should be a joint community/government effort, while as an instructional film, it offers itself as a model of how people can spearhead development efforts in their communities.

The film tells the story of how two school teachers, Dominic (Harford Anerobi) and Iruka (Fanny Elumeze), spearhead the development of the village of Umana in Udi district of Nigeria by mobilising the people into building a community maternity clinic. In pursuit of this goal, they seek the advice and help of the District Officer, E.R. Chadwick (who plays himself in the film), who supports the project by offering government aid as well as helping to mobilise the elders of the village to support the project. The project however runs into conflict when a prominent elder of the village and head of the ancestral cult, Egwugwu, Eze (Joseph Amalu), attempts to mobilise public opinion against the project, for fear that it will bring about changes within the

community that might undermine the authority of the cult. When he fails to win public support for the abandonment of the project, he makes a last desperate attempt after its completion by embarking on a scare campaign that any woman who delivers in the maternity clinic will lose her child during childbirth. In addition to this, he mobilises members of the cult and invades the maternity clinic at night in an attempt to scare away its city bred midwife and her first patient. On the night of the invasion, Iruka, who has gone to keep the midwife company, throws the hot water, which she has heated for a warm bath of the woman in labour, at the leader of the cult. This climactic act of courage finally defeats Eze and his cult members. The woman delivers safely and others soon follow suit. The film ends with an official opening ceremony of the maternity clinic, presided over by District Officer Chadwick.

In terms of narrative structure, the story is told in a simple straightforward manner without many narrative complications. It begins with a prologue bearing an intertitle message relating to the geographical location of the ethnic group whose self-help development projects it sets out to highlight, and ends in an epilogue with a work song expressing the spirit of self-help development and the dignity of labour. Its central conflict arises from Eze's attempt to undermine the the building of the maternity clinic. Once this conflict is resolved, narrative action moves quickly towards conclusion. The film is narrated mostly through an omniscient form of narration with occasional interventions by delegated narrators in the form of voice-over commentary by Chadwick and point-of-view shots of Iruka and the midwife. There are nine main sequences in the film, with each sequence dealing with a major event within the narrative. They are: the opening sequence which deals with the mass literacy campaign; the child paternity right case, and the proposition by the school teachers, Iruka and Dominic, for a community maternity clinic; a village council meeting called to discuss the teachers' proposition and Eze's opposition to the project; clearing of the maternity clinic site, moulding of blocks and laying the foundation of the building; completing the project; arrival of the city bred midwife and Eze's scare campaign to boycott the maternity clinic; the invasion of the maternity clinic by members of the ancestral

masquerade cult, the Egwugwus, led by Eze, and the delivery of the first baby in the clinic; the official opening ceremony of the clinic; and the road construction sequence.

The main theme of the film is self-help development, and it is introduced right from the opening intertitle message which serves as a prologue to the main narrative as well as highlighting the geographical space and ethnic configuration of the area in focus. The prologue begins as follows:

in a distant region beyond the River Niger, an ancient African tribe, the Abaja Ibos, have undertaken an ambitious programme of community development which has seldom been equalled.

Together they are teaching themselves to read and write, and are building schools, maternity homes, cooperative shops, and many miles of roads. With few resources but their own strength and spirit, they are starting to bridge the centuries dividing their way of life and ours.

In the opening sequence, the theme of self-help development highlighted in the prologue is immediately taken up in the first narrative action of the film. It begins with a shot of an adult mass literacy campaign gathering of the people of Umana, in the village square. This is followed by a cut to a shot of rows of men, with the frontmost row occupied by men sitting on the bare ground, and others standing behind them as in a family portrait. A gradual pan to screen left reveals a male teacher, Dominic, standing in front of a blackboard. The camera dollies in into a medium close-up of Dominic and then, cuts to a shot of a female teacher, Iruka, and her blackboard facing her women pupils. The first four shots of the film thus effectively establishes the division of public space along gender lines in which we see first, the male teacher and his male pupils, and then, the female teacher and her female pupils. Both sets of pupils occupy different archs of the circular space created around the village square. As I noted earlier, this gender division of public space owes its authority to the patriarchal division of public space in traditional African society. What the film has done is respect this tradition in the representation of public space. There are many other scenes within the film which are marked by this gender division of public space. I shall be referring to some of them shortly.

To return to the adult literacy class, a continuation of the leftward pan of the arch reveals a profile of the rows of women, some with babies on their laps, others breast-feeding their babies while concentrating on the ongoing lesson. This is followed by a cut to a medium close-up of a boy in the male section of the arch, pointing a stick to the letter "a" and pronouncing the sound for the elders, and another cut to a close-up of an old man and a small boy pronouncing the alphabet after the boy. Next, there is a cut back to the medium close-up of the boy continuing to teach them the alphabet, followed by another cut to a shot of three chiefs sitting on chairs in a front row, equally concentrating on the lesson. Thus apart from gender division of public space, class division is also established in the opening sequence. Usually, in traditional African societies with reigning monarchs, the king and his council of chiefs, made up of mostly elderly men who have distinguished themselves either in their trades or through services to the community, constitute the apex of the power structure. Below them are the council of elders, made up of both elderly men and women of the community, and then, the age grades, in order of seniority. There is no king in this adult literacy class, but there are titled chiefs in attendance, an indication of the fact that the community takes the mass literacy programme seriously. Though the power/class hierarchy of traditional African society is marked through representation of the spatial division of public space, it is not given special treatment in the order of representation.

The scene with the boy teaching the elders the alphabet is soon followed by a cut to a shot of Dominic, and to a close-up of a section of his male pupils which shows a man with a child on his lap, sitting among several children, all of whom are concentrating on the lesson. This is followed by a cut back to the right facial profile of Dominic. As he continues with his teaching, we see the dispersal of children in the background, indicating the end of their lesson. As soon as he notices this, Dominic ends his lesson. The sequence ends with a fade out on Dominic as he cleans the blackboard. What is of special interest in the last scene is the close-up of the man with a child on his lap concentrating on the ongoing lesson. In one respect, this close-up is meant to signify paternal love in traditional African society, but it can also be

considered as a signification of one of the customary ways of transmitting knowledge in traditional African society from one generation to the other. It is part of a long standing tradition whereby fathers take along their sons - ostensibly to help them carry their chairs, stools, and bags - to important elders' meetings where the sons are expected to sit inconspicuously among the elders and learn the art of public oratory and speech rhetoric. Most leaks from elders' council meetings are picked up by the womenfolk through their sons. Of course, part of the game includes learning to keep one's mouth shut in the midst of prodding for information by the women. The use of close-ups and medium close-ups in this sequence is however not intended as a means of granting narrative authority to any of the characters in the sequence. It merely serves in this instance to locate the scene of narrative action as well as highlight the genderisation of public space in traditional Africa society. There are of course sequences containing conscious linkage of spatial articulations and narrative authority, to character development and spectatorial spatial accessibility. I shall come to these shortly.

Apart from the mass literacy campaign sequence, the next sequence which directly addresses the theme of self-help development, is that dealing with the village council meeting called to discuss the proposed community maternity clinic. This meeting is significant for two reasons. First, it shows how local government functions in traditional African society as well as how public debates related to social welfare are conducted. Second, it serves to introduce the main conflict in the film: Eze's opposition to the project. I want to examine this sequence, to show how traditional African public discourse is conducted, who partakes in it, and how public opinion is mobilised for and against set common goals. The sequence begins with a pan of a group of village elders moving from screen right, through tree undergrowth, to a circular space in front of the chief's compound, on extreme screen left. The pan ends with a cut to a shot of the village council in session, discussing the proposed community maternity clinic. This is followed by a cut to a shot of rows of seated titled elders, and another cut to a pan from screen left to right which reveals Eze. In terms of spatial composition, there is a

repetition of the earlier noted genderisation of public space in the sitting arrangement. The men sit in the foreground, in an arch around the circular space, with the women standing in the background, behind them. The meeting begins with an address by Eze. Though he speaks in Ibo and what he says is not immediately translated, Dominic will later reveal in his briefing of Chadwick when he arrives, that Eze, a very prominent elder in the community, is opposed to the project. Even though Eze is opposed to the project, the chief of the village and other members of the council support it. For instance, while Eze is speaking, there is a cut to a reaction shot of one of the elders listening, with his chin resting on his right palm, and his left hand resting on his lap. This is followed by a cut back to Eze speaking in a frenzy as he tries to mobilise public opinion against the project. Suddenly, the elder sitting in a provocative pose, who is highlighted while Eze is speaking, stands up and interrupts Eze by telling him that the community would go ahead with the project whether he likes it or not. As he says this, we hear background voices approving what he has said. In a cut back to Eze, other members of the council shout him down as he attempts to continue his interrupted speech. Seeing that the majority of the elders favour the project, he storms out of the meeting, promising that he will make sure the project does not succeed. As he walks away through the front of the women, they are brought into full focus through a cut to which displaces the men from the frame, and positions the group of women standing in the row immediate to the men in the foreground. This is followed by two brief reverse shots of Eze walking away, and the women who boo him.

This scene is typical of how traditional African public discourse is conducted. Debates are often conducted between two main public figures noted for their public oratory and opposition to each others views. Their speeches often divide the house into two main camps, and the argument which carries the day is often determined by its ethical and moral strength as well as the general approving side commentaries which it receives. If public opinion is equally divided, the chief or king presiding over such meetings must take a stand by supporting the argument which he considers most beneficial to the community's social well being. In this particular case, we find that

public opinion is overwhelmingly in favour of the project. As the debate continues, there is a cut to Dominic and an Assistant District Officer dressed in Yoruba ceremonial outfits of *agbada* and cap, discussing in the foreground, with the elders in the background. Dominic asks his permission to try to persuade the elders to accept the project. Having received it, he addresses the elders in Ibo while standing in front of the chief of the village. The discussion scene between Dominic and the elders is in shot/reverse shot. While it is going on, Chadwick's voice-over commentary informing us that he has always been concerned with the progress of the village, intrudes into Dominic's speech. This voice-over intrusion is immediately followed by a cut to a shot of Chadwick being led into the chief's compound by a youth of the village. As they walk through the tree undergrowth, into the compound, Dominic walks into the frame from screen left, to receive Chadwick. He asks Dominic if the village has come to a consensus over the project and he informs him that Eze, a prominent elder in the village, is opposing it. Chadwick then asks Dominic if the senior wife of Eze is in the meeting and he replies she is, adding that Eze has forbidden his wives to join the women's cooperative that is supposed to raise the money to pay the midwife's salary. Chadwick assures him that he will speak to Eze's wife as they move into the meeting ground, to the front of the chief of the village who stands up and shakes hand with Chadwick. As they greet, the three of them are brought into focus, with Chadwick and Dominic positioned in the foreground of screen right while the chief stands in the foreground of screen left. In the background, behind them are members of the elder's council sitting an arch, towards screen right.

Chadwick tells the village chief that he has heard that some villagers are opposing the project, but that if the majority of members of the community are determined to have one built, there is no reason why they should not succeed. He then walks over to the women and asks to be shown Eze's senior wife. After he is shown her, he asks the woman if she wants her children to benefit from civilisation and she answers affirmatively in Ibo. Chadwick then cleverly sets her up by praising her as the bearer of many grown up and respected children in the village, and solicits her help to

convince the women of the village to join the cooperative society. Having received her promise that she will work towards such an end, they return to the elders. The conversation between Chadwick and Eze's senior wife is in shot/reverse shot that alternates between a full facial front view of Chadwick and the woman, and between him and Dominic, with the latter serving as interpreter to both of them. At the end of the scene, Chadwick asks for a song before he leaves. This request is followed by a cut to Chadwick and the chief, as both of them greet each other in a traditional Ibo custom for titled elders - a process which entails hitting each other, back-palm to back-back, and front-palm to front-palm, gently three times in each movement. A short dance then follows interspersed with cuts to men raising songs and others chorusing, as the meeting ends.

Besides highlighting the nature of traditional African public discourse, local government procedures, and introducing the element of conflict in the film, this sequence also deals with the nature of the relationship between the District Officer and the people of Udi District. From the way Chadwick conducts his discussions with the elders of Umana during the meeting, and the warmth and conviviality underlining their relationship, one can tell that the relationship between him and the people is built on mutual trust and respect. In fact, if you remove his colour, the District Officer could well pass for a local government official in contemporary Nigeria. He does not for once adopt a bullying tone in the discussion between him and Eze's senior wife, even though, as an agent of British imperial authority, he could easily have his way with regards to how he wants to run the district. Instead of imposing his views on community development projects on the people, he canvasses their support by informing them of the benefits they stand to gain if they embrace such projects. He also does not show contempt for the culture of the people; rather, he partakes in it and in this way, he wins their confidence. For instance, when towards the end of the meeting he asks for a little song before his departure, it is a request born of desire to partake in the cultural practices of the area under his jurisdiction, not one by a person who wants to be entertained as an onlooker. He partakes in the dance he requests for. He knows

the greeting rituals of titled elders in the community. Furthermore, throughout the film, he insists that the good cultural practices of the people should not be tampered with in the quest for development. Though there was a general British colonial policy in Africa to preserve aspects of good socio-cultural practice of the people, such a general guiding policy does not explain the good working relationship between Chadwick and the people of his district. It can only be explained as an individual trait of good leadership.

Chadwick also displays a high level of understanding of Ibo cultural practices in his handling of the child paternity case in the sequence preceding the village council meeting. I want to examine the scene dealing with the case because it shows that when the occasion calls for it, he knows how to strike a balance between moribund cultural practices that need discarding and modern cultural practices. The scene begins with a shot of Chadwick's district office in which we find him sitting in the foreground, back to the camera, and in the background, the couple disputing the paternity right over their son with an elderly man who claims he paid a dowry on the woman when she was a young girl which was not refunded when she grew up and decided to marry a younger man instead of him. By Ibo tradition, the elderly man whose dowry was not refunded before the woman married, has paternity right over children of such a marriage. Chadwick calls the child in dispute forward, and he moves into a mid-frame position between Chadwick and his parents. He asks the boy which of the two men is his biological father, and the boy turns and points to the man in front of whom he had been standing. Next, he asks the boy who buys his clothes, and in answer to Chadwick's question, the boy points to his biological father. Next, Chadwick asks him if he goes to school, and he answers by nodding his head. He then asks him who pays his school fees, and the boy points to his biological father while staring at the ground in front of him.

Chadwick, who is probably unaware of the fact that in traditional African culture, it is a sign of rudness to look one's elder directly in the eyes, especially in situations of close interrogation over culpable allegations, asks the boy to look him

straight in the eyes while answering his questions. As the interrogation continues, the shot structure alternates with Chadwick and the little boy exchanging foreground/background compositional spatial positioning within screen space. Next, he asks the boy if he has seen before now the elderly man claiming paternity right over him, and as the boy turns to look at the man, for the first time, there is a cut from the boy and Chadwick, to a medium close-up of the elderly man which positions him in the foreground of screen space, facing the camera, with a local constable in the background. This is followed by a cut back to a medium close-up of the boy and Chadwick, with the boy in the middle of the frame, facing the camera, as the main point of focus, and Chadwick positioned in foreground, back to the camera slightly to screen left.

In answer to Chadwick's question, the boy shakes his head as an indication that he does not know the man. Next, the shot is reversed with Chadwick now occupying the middle of the frame, facing the camera as the main point of focus, while the boy occupies the foreground of screen right, backing the camera. Chadwick further asks him if he would like to live with the elderly man and the boy shakes his head to indicate he would not like to do so. He asks him whom he would like to live with, and the boy points at his biological parents. Chadwick then tells him to go back to his biological parents. As the boy does that, there is a cut from Chadwick to the elderly man looking disconcertedly towards off screen right where the boy has just gone, with the local constable still standing in the background. This is followed by a cut from the man to a shot of the boy standing in front of his parents, with his father's hand on his shoulders. The interrogation then switches between Chadwick, the elderly man, and an office interpreter, shot mostly in medium shots.

Throughout the period of interrogation, both Chadwick and the man speak through the office interpreter. The elderly man does not state his side of the case, nor do the couple. The case in dispute is narrated through voice-over commentary by Chadwick. He asks the elderly man if he admits that the younger man is rightfully married to the woman and the man replies through the interpreter that he does.

Chadwick then tells him that in paternity cases in modern times, the welfare of the child takes precedence over any paternity claims which he may have over the boy because of customary laws. He tells the elderly man that he has examined the case thoroughly and that he is confident it would be in the child's interest to be under the custody of his biological parents. In addition, he warns him that he cannot hope to win the case in a modern law court should he contemplate taking legal action. He advises him instead to take his case to a customary court to seek recovery of his bride price.

Chadwick's handling of this case shows that he not only has a firm grasp of the culture of his area of jurisdiction but also that he is fair and firm in dispensation of justice. In contemporary Nigeria, if such customs still exists, the elderly man would be given similar advice. With regards to forms of narration, even though this scene displays a complex form of spatial articulation, especially in foreground and background composition, its use of medium shots and medium close-ups are non-discriminatory, and are not intended as means of exploiting aspects of character psychology or development. By this I mean that the spectator is granted equal spatial closeness to all the characters in the scene. For this reason, as in earlier noted similar forms of spatial articulation, medium shots and medium close-ups are used in this scene to locate the space of narrative action. The only time they are used, together with point-of-view shots, as forms of narrative authority, is in the sequence dealing with the Egwugwu's invasion of the maternity clinic. I should like to examine this sequence because beside consciously adopting this form of spatial articulation to grant narrative authority to Iruka and the midwife, it is also the film's climax.

The sequence begins with a shot of the maternity clinic in pitch darkness except for two half-opened windows casting rays of light from the interior of the building. This is followed by a cut to a shot of the door. The midwife opens the door, comes out, listens, and then, there is a cut to the surrounding bush, followed by a slow pan of the bush towards screen right. At the end of the pan, we see nothing but hear noises. This is followed by a cut to a shot of the midwife still standing at the door of the maternity clinic. She listens again, and on hearing nothing more, closes the door. Next,

there is a cut to the interior of the building as she leaves the door and moves towards the rows of beds for expectant mothers. As she gets close to the camera, it pans away from her, towards screen left, to reveal the pregnant woman whom we saw Iruka taking to the clinic at the end of the last sequence. The midwife stands by her bedside, places her hand on the woman's forehead to feel her temperature and then, there is a cut to a shot of the midwife looking frightenedly in the direction of the door, back at the woman, and then, towards the door. This is followed by a cut to the bush outside. This time, we perceive movements in the bush but we do not see anything. Next, there is a cut to a shot of the pregnant woman in bed with a parafin lamp by her bedside. This is followed by a cut back to the bush with the same noticeable movements, but once again we do not see anything. In a cut back to the midwife, we find her looking frightenedly towards screen right. She stands up from the woman's bedside and moves towards the opened window. This is followed by her point-of-view shot. But this time, there is a barely visible pair of horns jutting out of the bush.

In a cut back to the midwife, we notice that she has become notably frightened. As she moves frightenedly away from the window, there is a cut to the pregnant woman in bed. Next, there is a cut to the midwife contemplatively opening the door and a cut back to the now equally frightened woman thinking possibly that the midwife is about to flee, leaving her alone in the building. In a cut back to the midwife, she closes the door and goes to sit by the woman's bedside. This is followed by the midwife's point-of-view shot as she looks outside through the opened window, and then, we see the silhouette of a person entering the compound. The point-of-view shot is repeated as the midwife tries to look closely. She stands up and moves towards the window. Soon we begin to discern the figure to be that of a woman. Next, there is a cut to a shot of the midwife, framed by the window as she tries to decipher the figure which moves towards the door. As the figure gets to the door and knocks, there is a cut back to the extremely frightened face of the midwife. At the repeat of the knock, she moves towards the door, opens it, and discovers it is Iruka who has come to keep her company. Seeing that the midwife looks frightened, Iruka asks her who she

thought was knocking and the midwife replies she was not sure because a man came to see her earlier in the evening, to which Iruka replies that he must be Eze. The midwife then tells her that the man frightened her and warned her that their ancestors did not approve of these new developments. He had promised to bring out the dead (ancestral masquerades) that night to show her that the ancestors disapproved of her work in the maternity clinic. Iruka asks her if she believes in these things, and she replies that she does not but that she is frightened. Iruka then tells her that her patient too is frightened because there is no one to look after her. She then encourages her to go in with her to take care of the woman.

At the bedside, she asks the midwife if there is another lamp and she replies there is, and then, Iruka tells her to look after her patient while she lights the other lamp. Next, there is a cut to Iruka heating water with a giant pot, and then back to both of them sitting beside the woman. As they sit there, Iruka tells her that she has not heard any noise since she arrived so it could be the midwife's own imagination, and the midwife agrees that it must have been. This conversation is soon followed by a cut to the bush. This time, we see a figure dressed in raffia leaves, moving in the bush. Next, there is a cut back to both of them sitting beside the pregnant woman. Iruka goes to bring the water we saw her heating earlier close to the bedside. As the woman begins her labour, the noises resume. In spite of her display of boldness, even Iruka is temporarily frightened by the sounds but she quickly recollects herself, puts on a bold face and moves towards the window. At the window, her point-of-view shot is given as she looks from screen right to extreme screen left and sees the face of a masked figure lodged in the bush. Next, there is a cut back to Iruka as she leaves the window thoughtfully and calmly. In a cut back to the bush, we see the earlier pair of horns jutting out of the bush. Gradually, the figure wearing the horns begins to move towards the compound. A shot pan to screen left where Iruka saw a masked figure a moment ago, also reveals the masquerade she saw moving towards the compound.

In a cut back to the building, the now hysterical midwife tells Iruka that she is frightened. This is followed by a cut back to the bush which reveals an additional

monstrous-looking masquerade, bringing the total to three masquerades that are moving towards the maternity clinic. Next, there is a cut to the frightened face of Iruka looking towards the window as the monstrous-looking masquerade, possibly the leader, positions its head by the window. As Iruka looks, the mask head is enlarged through a dolly in, followed by a cut to the frightened but thoughtful face of Iruka. Instantly, she grabs the pot and throws the steaming water at the masquerade. It screams and runs off. This action is intercut with the woman delivering her baby and a cut to a shot of the three masquerades, with the monstrous-looking one in the middle. This shot is punctuated by several others that reveals either an individual masquerade or groups of masquerade, and a cut to a shot of the compound, now full of masquerades. Seeing what has just happened to the one that stood by the window, they back off towards the bush, turn on their heels and flee. The shot lingers on a bit to signify the passage of time as the day starts to break. This is followed by a cut to Iruka sitting on the verandah of the maternity clinic in the morning. Shortly afterwards, the midwife moves into the frame from screen left and hands Iruka the baby. This is followed by a cut to a close up of the baby, and to a shot of Iruka smiling as she holds the baby and a fade. In this sequence, point-of-view shots, medium shots and medium close-ups, are used to grant narrative authority to the midwife and Iruka.

In the case of point-of-view shots, we are made to see what both characters see from their point in space. There is therefore a transition from an omniscience form of narration, to character narration. Narrative authority in these instances lie with the characters. They anchor the story, and since one is granted access to their space, one is made to share their anxieties over the noises and movements in the bush. In the case of medium close-ups, they are used mostly as processes of character revelation and character psychology. In this sequence, this form of spatial articulation is used not just to locate the space of narrative action but also as means of granting the spectator access to the interior fears and anxieties of both characters. This is about the only time this form of spatial articulation is used in the film. Its usage in this sequence is a recognition of the importance of events in this sequence to the resolution of the

conflicts in the film. By allowing the spectator access to character psychology, through spatial proximity or point-of-view shots, the fears and anxieties of the characters can be shared by the spectator through empathy.

The final sequence I want to examine is that which deals with the opening ceremony of the maternity clinic. This sequence is significant because it contains Chadwick's speech which dwells upon the film's central theme of community self-help development, but also because this theme has implications for post-colonial development strategies. It begins with drumbeats, and a shot of a drummer sitting on a small hillside, followed by a cut to a shot of the chief of the village in front of his compound with two of his wives. He moves towards the clinic as the drumbeats continue. This is followed by a cut to Eze moving towards his hut. Soon, he is joined by one of his wives handing him his hat. They exchange hot words and he moves towards the direction of the maternity clinic. Next, there is a cut to Chadwick moving towards his car. As he drives off, the scene ends. This brief scene registers people related to the project in one way or another preparing to go to the official opening ceremony of the maternity clinic. The next scene begins with a shot of people and secular ceremonial masquerades dancing towards the compound. This is followed by a cut to Iruka standing by the window of the maternity clinic, and a point-of-view shot of her as she looks at the group of youngmen dancing into the maternity compound. In a cut back to Iruka, we find her smiling happily as she leaves the window and moves towards the delivery room to meet the midwife and the newly delivered baby. This is followed by a cut to Iruka and the midwife excitedly congratulating themselves, seeing that many more women have now come to the maternity clinic for delivery after the successful delivery of the first woman. They chat a bit with sounds of drumbeats in the background, and then, they move to join the pregnant women in their beds. Iruka lifts the baby from beside its mother, places it in a cot and stands a while admiring it. Then she moves outside to look at the youths dancing. As she looks, there is a shot pan from screen left to right to reveal the backs of seating elders, followed by a cut to a full frontal view of the elders, with Chadwick sitting among them. This is followed by a cut

to the young men dancing outside the square space surrounded by the sitting elders and other standing spectators who have turned up for the official opening ceremony of the compound. Next, there is a cut to a shot of the square space surrounded by the elders. An old man moves into the middle of the square space and begins to greet those who have turned up for the opening ceremony. He moves towards Chadwick and both of them greet each other in the traditional manner of Ibo titled elders. As the youths begin to dance into the open square space, we note that some of the spectators are holding little Union Jack flags, indicating that this is colonial Nigeria. They dance both in groups and individually before the gathered audience. This is followed by cuts to professional dancers performing in the middle of the square, and to a group of youngsters practising their dance steps to the encouragement of the elders sitting closest to them. Next, there are brief cuts to display of finesse and mastery by both individual drummers and dancers.

The dancing scene ends with timed drumming and dancing by a single master dancer. At the end of these solo performances, there is spontaneous applause and then Chadwick addresses the gathering. He congratulates the elders and people of Umana village for building the community maternity clinic. He tells them that he realised it has not been built without opposition from some foolish people. As he says this, there is a cut to a reaction shot of Eze laughing and clapping like everybody else, but on noticing that they are looking at him, he casts a sneering glance towards Chadwick. On the mention of the word opposition, everybody begins to laugh again at Eze who, in spite of himself, soon joins in the laughter. Chadwick continues his address by telling them that the value of the work they have done cannot be measured by the number of bricks that they have made or even by the size of building. He adds that the value lies in the power that they have demonstrated and the spirit they have put into it. He also tells them of an interesting experience which he had as District Officer when he first started working. According to him, he got to a village where the elders gathered £10,000 and came to him pleading that they want to "buy" civilisation. He informs the gathering that he told people of the village that they cannot "buy" civilisation like food in the

market, and that as far as civilisation is concerned, people matter more than money. He advises them that if they want to catch up with modern people and improve their standard of living, then they certainly have made a good start. He further informs them that the village of Umana is just one of forty villages in the clan that have embarked on self-help development projects. He admonishes them not to stop with this single project but to move ahead into others. He also tells them that they must build their own future because nobody else can do it for them. He further informs them that the people of his country will only be too grateful to help them when they know that they are willing to help themselves. In addition, he informs them that a neighbouring village has embarked upon the building of a road called Nkedimkpa - which means "by the power of strong men" - and invites the elders to the village to see the work being done. Chadwick's address ends the sequence. Chadwick's address virtually sums up the theme of the film: the people need to take their destiny in their hands by embarking upon community self-help development projects.

Ordinarily, the idea of community self-help development is a lofty one, especially if it is made to complement government projects. It is however wrong to base the progress and modern development of a country - or countries since the film is propagating this form of development in respect of all British colonies in Africa - upon this form of development as the film's thematic thrust seems to suggest. It is a rather disingenuous way of absolving government of its responsibilities to society. Any government that collects taxes, custom and excise duties, and other forms of tariffs has a duty, to develop its society. While community self-help development needs to be encouraged in every society, it should be considered the last resort in the development strategy of a country. I say this because watching this film has taught me a lot about the roots of the contemporary Nigerian government's emphasis upon community self-help development. Its roots lie in this colonial practice. However, while British colonial governments may have adopted this development strategy as a way of conserving funds and ensuring that each territory pays for the cost of its government and development, for that of most post-colonial governments in Africa, certainly that of

Nigeria, it is a strategy for absolving government of its development responsibilities to the people. Emphasis is often placed on community self-help development at the expense of a well planned development strategy, and of course, funds saved from such a practice often end up in the private accounts of government officials in Western capitals. In most parts of Nigeria today, development at the community level, the building of schools, maternity clinic, local dispensaries, postal agencies, sometimes even roads, etc., are built through fund raising ceremonies and levies within the communities. This places financial burden on people since they have to pay these levies in addition to government taxes and other financial burdens. What annoys people most is the knowledge that though the government is not able to fulfil its obligation to society, individuals within such governments, without inherited wealth or personal wealth before assuming public offices, have become millionaires over night by virtue of their public service. It is for these reasons that community self-help development has become a very a unpopular development notion today in most African countries, and the knowledge that it is a colonial inheritance will certainly come as a shock to many on the continent.

With respect to character-subjectivity and narrative authority, events in *Daybreak in Udi* are structured around the character of Chadwick. He is situated at the centre of most events. Even when he is not physically present in a scene, he continues to control the flow of narrative actions by virtue of the omniscient powers invested in him which allows him to float above and comment upon unfolding events. A good example of such narrative authority is displayed in the opening scene of the village council meeting where we hear his voice-over commentaries on events before his physical appearance. At other times, he is granted omniscient narrative authority in addition to his physical control of narrative action, as in the case of the opening scene of the child paternity case sequence. The overall omniscient control of narrative action which the Chadwick character displays is however not extended to the sphere of discriminating spectatorial spatial accessibility or inaccessibility in respect of his character and others in the film. By this I mean he does not enjoy any special close

relationship with the spectator by way of exteriorisation of character psychological make up. The use of such forms of spatial articulations as medium shots and medium close-ups as studied approaches to character development or revelation are also not exclusively tied to the Chadwick character. Other characters such as Dominic, Iruka, the midwife, Eze, all enjoy this form of spatial articulations. The only advantage Chadwick enjoys over other characters, is his omniscient control over flow of narrative action.

Apart from the Chadwick character, the other character who enjoys a comparative level of narrative authority is Iruka. The Iruka persona is constructed as a modern strong-willed African woman who has not only risen above the dogma of traditional African superstitious beliefs but is also aware that such superstitious beliefs are not unique to Africa. The defeat of Eze and members of the Egwugwu cult is due to her courage, imagination and swift reaction. It is Iruka who gives courage to the terrified midwife who is contemplating fleeing the maternity clinic before her arrival to keep her company. In scenes involving her, Dominic and Chadwick, she demands that she should be allowed to air her views on the proposed maternity clinic project when she notices that Dominic and Chadwick are monopolising the discussions. Though the assertive nature of the Iruka character is not strange to African women, her interruptions of Dominic when he is speaking, and demands that she should be allowed to air her view, are characteristically Western. Though African women live in a male dominated society, they always put across their views on major issues - and those views are taken seriously - without adopting the confrontational attitude reminiscent of radical Western feminists. Certainly, few educated African women of the late 1940s possessed the assertive personality displayed in the film by the Iruka persona. Of course, there were powerful women activists during this period in Nigeria, like the late Mrs Fumilayo Ransom-Kuti, the late Mrs Margaret Ekpo, Hajia Sawaba Gambo, etc., who were notable political players and women leaders at the national level, but granted that these national activists possess the assertive personality of the Iruka persona, certainly a village school teacher of Iruka's calibre of the late 1940s could not have

possessed such assertive personality qualities. It seems therefore that this character is drawn more with the behavioural characteristics of the Western woman in mind than an African woman. Having said this, the Iruka character certainly enjoys a lot of narrative authority through spatial articulation, especially in the climactic confrontation between her and the leader of the Egwugwu cult, Eze. In the scenes of confrontation, she is granted narrative authority through character narration, by way of her point-of-view shots. In this respect, the relationship between the spectator and space of narrative action is articulated from her point in space. We are forced to see and feel the flow of narrative action from her point in space. In this way, we partake in her fears and anxieties of the mysterious noises which precedes the physical appearance of the Egwugwus. Even though the midwife enjoys similar narrative authority through spatial articulation in this sequence, it is Iruka's display of courage and imagination, when it matters, that is highlighted in the sequence. She holds the key to the resolution of the film's conflict. For this reason, and the strength of her verbal views, she is the most visible of all the African characters.

Beside Iruka, Dominic also plays a leading role in the realisation of the project. Even though he is a young man, he has earned the respect of elders of Umana village through his humility and dedication to duty, both as school teacher and agent of social development. As representative of the elite class at the village level, Dominic and his colleagues serve as bridge between modernity and traditionalism, between the colonial state and the community. It is due to their tenacious spirit and dedication to the processes of modernisation that the adult mass literacy campaign, and the maternity clinic project are realised. However, the Dominic character does not possess the sort of narrative authority imbued in the Iruka character. He is characterised in general terms as a dedicated school teacher interested in the development of his community.

Apart from Iruka and Dominic, the other visible African character in the film, is Eze. Though the main conflict in the film arises from Eze's objections to the proposed community maternity clinic, his objections are represented as deriving from fear of the consequences of social change than anything else, and such individual

spoilers are not lacking in contemporary African society, nor are they lacking in other parts of the world. As represented in the film, the collective will of the people often neutralises the individualist crusades of such people. It is possible also to take a sympathetic view of Eze's behaviour from the perspective of his leadership of the ancestral cult, the Egwugwus, who are highly respected in Ibo society as custodians of tradition. The Egwugwus, by virtue of their calling, represent the most conservative arm of society. The cult members are recognised by the society as vehicles through which the ancestors maintain links, through their physical presence as masquerades, with the world of the living. It is through the Egwugwus that the ancestors are supposed to intervene in the activities of their lineage; hence the Egwugwus are recognised by traditional Ibo society as the highest arbiter in inter-family disputes. Looked at from this perspective, Eze's behaviour becomes understandable. His objections to the project derives from fear of eroding the power of the Egwugwus to maintain adherence to traditional Ibo cultural practices. It is also an objection deriving from fear of loss of one's power - in this case, Eze's power as leader of the Egwugwu cult. But once he realises that building the maternity clinic would not necessarily diminish the power of the cult, he begins to support the march towards development and modernity.

Daybreak in Udi was made after the Second World War when the agitation for independence had already commenced in most African countries and if the producers so wished, they could have structured the narrative in accordance with the tradition of colonialist African cinema by dwelling on the fixed notion of African barbarism as in the case of *Sanders of the River*, *Mister Johnson*, *Men of Two Worlds*, *Simba*, etc. This would have easily been realised, especially as the film chooses the form of dramatised documentary in its treatment of colonial community self-help development. *Mister Johnson* and *Men of Two Worlds* also deal with the issue of colonial development but they do so from the perspective of colonialist discourse. Africans in these films do not take charge of their own affairs. They are represented as people who are incapable of independence of thought and action, as good labourers,

full of energy and brawns but with little brains. Where one of them is credited with cognitive abilities as in *Men of Two Worlds*, he is represented as a victim of auto-suggestion and superstition. This is where *Daybreak in Udi* is different. In general, the film does not romanticise Africans nor does it romanticise colonial community self-help development programmes. Like every society in a state of transition to a new order, the people of Umana are not represented as exempt from the machinations of those who fear the consequences of change or the forces of change. Rather the film represents the pursuit of community self-help development as an endeavour full of stumbling blocks. The activities of Eze and his collaborators represent such stumbling blocks.

Another interesting aspect of *Daybreak in Udi* worth noting is that it is one of the very few films produced during the colonial period, that has represented Africans as initiators of development projects. Though we know through Chadwick's voice-over commentary that the village of Umana is just one of forty villages in Udi District to embark upon self-help community development, the actual initiative to start the maternity clinic at Umana, is credited in the film to the two school teachers, Iruka and Dominic. *Daybreak in Udi* also charts an alternative colonial realism by shedding the militaristic image of the District Officer of the sort that one confronts in *Sanders of the River* and *Mister Johnson*. E.R. Chadwick, the District Officer of Udi District in colonial Nigeria, is represented as a man of the people, a well trusted and much loved District Officer who partakes generously in the customary practices of the area of his jurisdiction. Even though he is a colonial agent whose power is superior to that of his subjects, he insists that the traditional practices of the people should not be undermined in the name of development and modernity. In upholding this cardinal policy of British colonial governments in Africa, he helps to preserve the good aspects of African tradition. It is also noteworthy that even though it is within his power to enforce the completion of the community maternity project by incarcerating Eze and his collaborators, he refuses to do this; instead, he subtly exploits the phenomenon of inter-village development rivalry and pride in colonial African society, to defeat Eze.

As I earlier noted, he also displays a comparatively high level of understanding of Ibo customary practices in his handling of the child paternity dispute. His recommendations, with regards to the case, are the sort that the elderly man will receive in contemporary Ibo society if such practices still exist.

In sum, *Daybreak in Udi*, dramatises efforts by the people of Umana village in Udi District of colonial Nigeria to develop their community. It also relates some of the conflicts which the people have to overcome in their quest for development. In contradistinction to the discursive traditions of colonialist African cinema which represents Africans as degenerate barbaric people, the film represents Ibo society of the colonial era as a developing society - like any other of the colonised world - struggling against the forces of traditionalism in its efforts to develop and embark on the road to modernisation. With regards to the film's central theme of community self-help development, I have argued that though the notion of community self-help development can be considered as an additional complementary strategy to a government's overall strategy for the development of its society, it is ethically wrong to suggest, as the film's underlining argument seems to imply, that the British colonial government should not be solely held responsible for the development of the colonies. If the film is considered along this line of argument, as I believe it sets out to do - i.e., that it is produced in response to the growing post-war criticism of British colonial stewardship - to absolve the British colonial authorities of their responsibilities to the colonies, then it ought to be considered as a disingenuous attempt to pass the buck of development to indigenous communities even though they do not control the apparatus of government and revenue collection. As I earlier noted, this tradition of placing the burden of development in a country within the framework of community self-help development, has been passed on to post-colonial governments in Africa where the system has become one of the abused loop-holes for siphoning public funds into the private accounts of government officials. For sure, community self-help development is worth encouraging, but only as a complementary strategy to government's overall plan for development. If the film had been structured to pursue such a line of argument, it

would have been much more acceptable. The main line of argument pursued in the film is that if communities embark upon self-help development projects, then British people will be only too willing to offer help and assistance. Though such a line of argument would be feasible in a post-colonial context, if it considered as part of development aid to such communities, in a colonial context, such a line of argument will be a weak one, especially when it is considered as an argument in response to criticism of British colonial stewardship, because the onus of development lies with the British colonial government since it is the sole collector of taxes and other revenues in the colonies. It is ethically wrong to pass the buck of development to communities within the colonies and British philanthropists.

4.3 Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have traced the historical background to the development of colonial African instructional cinema. I have argued that I consider the practice(s) of colonial African instructional cinema as an alternative cinematic practice - distinguishable from the practice of colonialist African cinema - in African cinema. Most film scholars who have written on African cinema often fail to make distinctions between the two cinematic practices that existed in colonial Africa. The result is that one is left with the impression that alternative voices or practices did not exist apart from the traditional discursive practices of colonialist texts. I have equally argued that documentary films should be treated as discursive texts, and on the strength of this argument, I have analysed *Men of Africa* and *Daybreak in Udi* as case studies of colonial African instructional cinema. In the following chapter, I shall be examining films belonging to the discursive tradition of colonialist African cinema. I shall also argue why I think they should be distinguished from films of colonial African instructional cinema.

CHAPTER FIVE.

COLONIALIST AFRICAN CINEMA.

5.1. Introduction.

In this chapter, I shall be examining the historical background to the emergence of colonialist African cinema. This shall be followed by a classification of the various types of films which constitutes the cinematic practice as a genre, and a tabulation of its general modes of representation. The main argument I shall be pursuing in this chapter is that colonialist African cinema is an outgrowth of colonialist African discourse, especially of colonialist African literature from which most its texts are adapted. I shall also be arguing that the main ideas which inform these films are the nineteenth century racial theories which constitute Africans next to apes, in the evolutionary chain of human beings. This order of classification provides the framework within which the various metaphors of African savagery and bestiality are invented. I shall further argue that the association between Africans and bestiality in these films robs them of their legitimate rights as human beings and as a result, this set of films needs to be distinguished from colonial African instructional cinema which constitutes Africa as a developing society and Africans as knowing and knowledgeable human beings willing and able to learn and master modern forms of social development.

The main thrust of my textual analysis will be directed towards examining how African subjectivity is constructed in contrast to European or other subjective types. To round off this chapter, *Tarzan the Ape Man* (W.S. Van Dyke, 1932), *Sanders of the River* (Zoltan Korda, 1935), *King Solomon's Mines* (Robert Stevenson, 1937), *The African Queen* (John Hurston, 1951), *Simba* (Brian Desmond Hurst, 1955), and *Chocolat* (Claire Denis, 1988), will be analysed as case studies of colonialist African films.

5.2. The Historical Background of Colonialist African Cinema.

The roots of colonialist African cinema can be traced to colonialist African discourse in general and colonialist African literature in particular. Most of its texts are either adaptations from literary texts or personal memoirs. This pattern is however not peculiar to Africa. Robert Stam and Louise Spence note that

colonialist representation did not begin with the cinema; it is rooted in a vast colonial intertext, a widely disseminated set of discursive practices. Long before the first racist images appeared on film screens of Europe and North America, the process of colonialist image-making, and resistance to that process, resonated through Western literature. Colonialist historians, speaking for the 'winners' of history, exalted the colonial enterprise, at bottom little more than a gigantic act of pillage whereby whole continents were bled of their human and material resources, as a philanthropic 'civilising mission' motivated by a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease and tyranny (Stam and Spence, 1983: 5).

An earlier collection of essays on colonialist African cinema, edited by Richard A. Maynard, *Africa on Film: Myth and Reality*, has equally traced the roots of the cinematic practice to colonialist African literature (Maynard, 1974), as has Jeffrey Richards, in his study of what he refers to as the Cinema of Empire, which includes many of the films I have classified under colonialist African cinema. Richards also states that Hollywood's involvement in the practice was driven by two factors: "the desire for exotic and romantic escapism" and "the commercial factor" (Richards, 1973: 3). This perhaps explains the investments in the Tarzan series of films, the majority of which were set in Africa. Writing on the ideology of the Cinema of Empire, Richards observes that

what becomes immediately obvious when viewing these films is that, although they are made in the last decades of the Empire's existence, they do not reflect contemporary ideas about the Empire. The ideas they reflect are those of late nineteenth century... The constitutional developments in the Empire in the inter-war years find no place in the cinema of Empire. In films, the Empire is unchanged and unchanging (Richards, 1973: 7).

The prevalent ideas propagated in the nineteenth century as they relate to Africa, are racial theories aimed at proving the racial inferiority of Africans. As I have noted in my literature review, the fallacy of such theories have since been the subject of many scholarly works (Mudimbe, 1988; Stephan, 1990; Banton, 1987). But the fact that

these racial theories were propagated by the cream of Euro-American scholarship for more than three centuries has left its mark. These same theories are the ones that informed and continue to inform colonialist African films.

In colonialist African cinema, people who are different, not only in culture but also in skin colour and physical outlook, are denied their difference and are measured by European concepts of social organisation, cultural practices and notions of aesthetics. Categories of cultural experience and physical outlook which mark out Africans as different from Europeans are cinematically highlighted not so much to acknowledge them as such but specifically to disavow such differences or use them as representative paradigms of perversions of European ideals. In essence, colonialist African discourse or its cinematic practice, is an arrested form of knowledge and perception, it is a partial blindness that arises from the inability to see beyond oneself or one's cultural boundaries or the extension of one's cultural boundaries over others by means of physical force and discursive self-aggrandisement. Paul Bohannan has argued that "Africa was the 'Dark Continent', but the darkness had much more to do with the European and American visitors to it, and workers in it, than it had to do with Africans" (Bohannan, 1974: 2). This fact is often overlooked in the representation of Africans in colonialist African films.

The association of Africans with savagery and bestiality began with documentaries such as *Tuaregs in their Country* (1909), *Big Game Hunting in Africa* (1909), *Missionaries in Darkest Africa* (1912), *The Military Drill of the Kikuyu Tribes and Other Ceremonies* (1914), and film shorts such as, *How a British Bull-dog Saved the Union Jack* (1906), which deals with the British-Zulu war of 1906-1907, and D.W. Griffith's *The Zulu Heart* (1908), in which a Zulu turns on his fellows in order to aid the whites, etc. However, most film historians now cite Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), as the film which codified the stereotypical images of blacks, in general, in the cinematic medium (Pines, 1975: 7-32; Leab, 1975: 23-57; Cripps, 1977: 15; Nesteby, 1982: 27-57). Though the film explores and exploits white fears and anxieties about the black presence in America and in this respect, it can be

considered as dealing specifically with an African-American experience in colonialist filmic representation, in the opening sequence, the film traces the problem of the black presence to Africa and the slave trade. Through this association, metaphors of African savagery and bestiality are transposed to African-Americans and vice versa. With respect to Africa itself, the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs and the Tarzan series of films based upon them, helped to canonise these metaphors of African savagery and bestiality. Brian Street draws similar conclusions with respect to his analysis of the novels of empire when he states that

Edgar Rice Burroughs, the inventor of Tarzan, for instance, helps to fix the notion for future generations of young readers that people like their ancestors may still be found in some forgotten jungles, dancing ape-like rituals in ways that European society has left behind. His florid jungle prose transforms the scientific theory of his day into vivid and memorable images (Street: 98).

Not only do colonialist films deny Africans their individual identities and social values, as in almost every other aspect of the unequal Afro-European relationship, Africans are made victims of European psychic projections and fantasies. Africans are cinematically represented as sexual perverts, cannibals, sadists, despots, idlers, indolent, gutless, timid, superstitious, and barbarous. Just about any social practice which European and Hollywood film producers and directors consider uncivil, is projected upon Africans. When they are not being portrayed as childish and harmless, they are depicted at the other extreme as heartless despots and sadistic murderers; when they are not gutless, they are portrayed as irrational and bloodthirsty warriors. Broadly speaking, most colonialist African films can be categorised as melodramas. Melodrama has been defined variedly by various critics and theoreticians (Frank Rahill, 1967; Smith, 1973; Brooks, 1976; Gledhill, 1987). The one thing that unites these varied definitions however is the centrality of opposing complex moral orders and social values. Rahill defines melodrama as

a form of dramatic composition in prose partaking of the nature of tragedy, comedy, pantomime, and spectacle, intended for a popular audience. Primarily concerned with situation and plot...more or less fixed complement of stock characters, the most important of which are a suffering heroine or hero, a persecuting villain, and a benevolent comic. It is conventionally

moral and humanitarian in point of view and sentimental and optimistic in temper, concluding its fable happily with virtue rewarded after many trials and vice punished. Characteristically it offers elaborate scenic accessories and miscellaneous divertissements and introduces music freely, typically to underscore dramatic effects (Rahill, 1967: xiv).

He also states that from its roots in popular theatre in the late eighteenth century, the form was taken up by the popular novel and film and television, and that as its audience grew in sophistication, especially in the nineteenth century with the rise of the bourgeoisie, it adopted a much more subtle approach to characterisation, the employment of music was curtailed and the extravagant embellishments in scenography were discarded. Heroes and heroines who are less than blameless, especially in love, began to emerge, so too were villains who were more to be pitied than censured when all the evidence was in, even heroes who refused to fight. The unhappy ending also became common. He also states that melodrama in its dramaturgic apparatus of villain-heroine conflict, a persecution plot with a happy ending, and a *raisonneur*, offer an almost perfect instrument for propaganda, that during the nineteenth century, this instrument was pressed into the service of innumerable crusades: national patriotism, anticlericalism, abolition of slavery, prohibition, and even tax and prison reform (Rahill: xv-xvi). With respect to film, Gledhill has offered one of the most comprehensive historical and theoretical study of melodrama. In Gledhill's words, the "term denotes a fictional or theatrical kind, a specific cinematic genre or a pervasive mode across popular culture ...melodrama both overlaps and competes with realism and tragedy, maintaining complex historical relations with them" (Gledhill: 1). She also states that

melodramatic desire crosses moral boundaries, producing villains who, even as the drama sides with the 'good', articulate opposing principles, with equal, if not greater, power. In so doing it accesses the underside of official rationales for reigning moral orders - that which social convention, psychic repression, political dogma cannot articulate. Thus whether melodrama takes its categories from Victorian morality or modern psychology, its enactment of the continuing struggle of good and evil forces running through social, political and psychic life draws into a public arena desires, fears, values and identities which lie beneath the surface of publicly acknowledged world (Gledhill: 33).

Gledhill further argues that in film, the form has grown from its preoccupation with the "realism" associated with the masculine sphere of actions and violence, to the woman

film, with its emphasis on talk rather than action. This generic shift has subsequently led to the empowerment of women within this genre (Gledhill: 35). With respect to colonialist African cinema, melodrama takes the form of the opposition, through comparative schema, between European and African subjects, culture and moral values, belief systems, and other institutional practices. The genre does not empower Africans, rather, it represents them, like American Indians in the Western, as degenerate and barbaric people. Villainy is identified with Africans just as virtue and moral uprightness is identified with Europeans. The only exceptions are the "good" African who collaborates with the European colonial authority or the degenerate working class European who fraternises with Africans. African counter-discourses emerge in these films, mostly, through the representations of violent confrontations between Europeans and Africans. Though these violent confrontations are represented as misguided and unwarranted savage attacks, since most of the films do not explain the rationale for the attacks, this silence can be interpreted as an admission of Africans' objection to European colonial authority.

From the above definitions, one can deduce the fact that melodrama is a complex generic form with various sub-genres and categories. However, within this broad category, colonialist African films constitute a genre by themselves since they employ recognisably colonialist tropes of representation in their narrative structure, characterisation, spatio-temporal articulations, etc. What makes these films colonialist is the fact that they are constrained by colonialist thought. Thomas Sobchack has dwelt upon the various manners in which genre films become constrained by the conventions and thoughts underlying such forms. He observes that the genre film

is a classical mode in which imitation not of life but of conventions is of paramount importance...Though there may be some charm in the particular arrangement of formulaic variables in the most current example of a genre, the audience seeks the solid and familiar referents of that genre, expecting and usually receiving a large measure of the known as opposed to the novel. Elevated and removed from everyday life, freed from the straight-jacket of mere representationalism, genre films are pure emotional articulation, fictional constructs of the imagination, growing essentially out of group interests and values (Sobchack, 1977: 52).

Though most colonialist African films belong to one genre by virtue of the fact that they subscribe to colonialist thought, they do reflect additional sub-generic narrative and thematic contingencies that require distinction. While some like *Tarzan the Ape Man* (W.S. Van Dyke, 1932), *King Solomon's Mines* (Robert Stevenson, 1937), *The African Queen* (John Huston, 1951), *Greystoke* (Hugh Hudson, 1984), etc, can be grouped under colonialist adventure films, other like *Sanders of the River* (Zoltan Korda, 1935), *Men of Two Worlds* (Thorold Dickson, 1946), *Simba* (Brian Desmond Hurst, 1955), *The Kitchen Toto* (Harry Hook, 1987), *Chocolat* (Claire Denis, 1988) or *Mister Johnson* (Bruce Beresford, 1990), can be categorised as colonial burden films because of the predominance of the theme of burden of colonial administration in them. *Simba* and *Kitchen Toto* can additionally be qualified as decolonisation conflict films or liberation struggle films, even though their British producers intended them to be some kind adventure thrillers exploiting the violent milieu of the "Mau Mau" for dramatic effects. Other sub-genres include, colonialist safari films, of which a most typical example is *Mogambo* (John Ford, 1953), and colonialist autobiographical films such as *Chocolat* (Claire Denis, 1988) and *Out of Africa* (Sydney Pollack, 1985).

5.3. General Modes of Representation in Colonialist African Cinema.

The following are some of the general conventional manners in which Africans and African culture are represented in colonialist African cinema. Within the practice, the application of various metaphor of savagery and barbarity to Africans is carried out without discrimination, with respect to class, ethnicity or gender. As I earlier noted, the only exception in this regard is the "good" African, and the good African is one who collaborates with British colonial authority:

(i) Prolonged emblematic panoramic shots of the African landscape. The preferred shot is that which I shall call, the "safari shot". This is a shot that captures the landscape against the background of a broad spectrum of animals roaming the landscape. Its origin lies deep in European travel literature and explorers' memoirs which described African as a hunter's haven. A classic example of these shots can be

found in *Sanders of the River* where there is prolonged gratuitous footage of animals being sadistically pursued by an aircraft in a games park possibly in Kenya. These types of safari footage are used in many of the films. The safari shots have both land and water varieties. The water variety displays the danger posed to explorers and adventurers by crocodiles and hippopotami. Such footage is extensively used in films like *Tarzan the Ape Man*, *Sanders of the River*, *The African Queen*, and *Mogambo*. Even though they are supposed to provide specular pleasures for Western spectators, the application of such footage appears to be driven by geographic and ethnographic interests rather than the dictates of plot. The safari footage is therefore utilised purely for the sake of exploiting the geographic otherness and difference of the African landscape for the specular pleasure of sedentary spectators in Europe who do not have the financial wherewithal to engage in adventures and travels and have the benefit of physically beholding the scenes that are packaged for them in form of safari film footage. Through the safari footage, they are invited to partake in the wild pleasures of adventures.

(ii) The representation of Africans as cannibals. Examples of this kind of representation can be found in *Sanders of the River*, especially in the sequence dedicated to the killing of Fergusson by king Mofalaba. It is encapsulated in the pidgin English exchange between Mofalaba and his subjects: "Who chop Fergusson?", meaning "Who ate Fergusson?"; to which they all answer defensively, "the whiteman chop Fergusson".

(iii) The portrayal of Africa as a symbolic Garden of Eden - albeit one infested with dangerous diseases - through the use of expressionistic lighting. This type of cinematic framing of the African landscape is utilised in the opening sequence of *Men of Two Worlds*, a film that deals with the theme of the clash of cultures. In this film, through the use of special lense filters, static camera pans, and expressionistic lighting, an atmosphere of ironic calm and serenity is created, even though the film has much to do with the deception of outward appearances. As the film unfolds, we begin to realise that the initial symbolic framing of the landscape as a "Garden of Eden", is intended as

an ironic comment upon the fact that the area is infested with the deadly lassa fever carrier, the tsetse fly. Much of the film has to do with the cultural and metaphysical confrontations that arise when a London based educated son of the village is imported to try and persuade his people of the need for resettlement elsewhere.

(iv) The organisation of a cinematic scheme of binarisms that counterpose European cultural practices to those of Africa. The intention is to portray how radically inferior African cultural practices are in comparison to those of Europe. This is the organisational mentality behind colonialist film culture. The regime of this cinematic practice operates through comparative alternation of shots that displays the outward appearances of Europeans and Africans, the interior decors and furnishing of their dwellings, environments, social atmospheres and moods, or through narrative comments on African social practices. The whole reasoning proceeds from the use of European norms and values in the assessment of African cultural practices.

(v) The representation of Africans as a sexually perverse people eternally preoccupied with procreation because of their different marital practices. Typical examples of these tropes of representation abound in most of the films but they are much more explicitly portrayed in the sequences that follow the proposal and marriage between Lilongo and Bosambo in *Sanders of the River*, and also in the sequence that preceeds the departure for the "gorrilla country" by the hunters in *Mogambo*, where the wives of one of the guides are paraded as an instance of the sexual perversion of Africans. I should like to add at this point that polygamy is an authentic ancient African cultural practice, one that is widely practised even today. The portrayal of this practice as an index of sexual permissiveness is another instance of European projection of their values upon Africans.

(vi) The portrayal of African kings as despots and their subjects as oppressed people in need of European political redemption. While it is true that there is historical evidence of reigns of tyrannical kings in Africa - as there is in every other part of the world - the traditional mode of government had its own way of ridding itself of such bad elements. They were either given poison to drink publicly by the kingmakers as

evidence of the society's dissatisfaction with their governance or compulsorily exiled from the kingdom (Crowther, 1962: 53-65). African kings or community leaders are portrayed as despots in *Tarzan the Ape Man*, *Sanders of the River*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *Men of Two Worlds*, *Simba* etc.

(vii) The representation of the African environment, metaphorically, as a personal antagonist that must be overcome or transversed through symbolic heroic acts. Tropes of this representation are much more prevalent in adventure films like *Tarzan the Ape Man*, *King Solomon's Mines*, and *The African Queen*, but they can also be seen in colonial burden films like *Sanders of the River* and *Men of Two Worlds*, where the struggle to conquer the environment is symbolically portrayed as the triumph of a dogged work ethic over debilitating sickness, lassa fever or malaria fever, unleashed by the environment.

(viii) The cinematic constitution of two types of colonised African archetypes: the cooperative and therefore civilised African, and the rebellious and barbaric ones. Subjective camera positions are granted more to the former than the latter.

(ix) The organisation of a cinematic narrative structure and subjective camera positioning around a European male protagonist whose "heroic" acts of physical and symbolic militarism are narrativised as necessary appurtenances of the burden of "civilising" the natives. All films with armed confrontations between Europeans and Africans are filmed this way.

(x) The representation of Africans and African cultural practices as objects of specular pleasures. This practice is most prevalent in those films that incorporate African dances into their narrative structures. Anybody well informed in traditional African performance practices will be bemused at the incongruity of the transplantation. Often, they appear to have been grafted into the narrative for the purely specular pleasures of Western spectators since the dances do not further the progress of the narrative in any way.

(xi) The emblematic representation of pre-colonial African soldiers as spear and shield carrying or bow and arrow wielding warriors attired exotically with white-plumed headgears.

Invariably, all of the above do not occur in one single film. Historical periods and the thematic preoccupations in each sub-genre determine the choice of representation. Moreover, knowledge of the conventions of colonialist African cinema alone does not explain how colonialist thoughts are narrativised in a film. One needs to analyse the films, for only then can one demonstrate the manner in which such thoughts are articulated on film. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will be undertaking case studies of six selected colonialist African films produced between 1930 and 1990, namely, *Tarzan the Ape Man*, *King Solomon's Mines*, *The African Queen*, *Sanders of the River*, *Chocolat* and *Simba*.

The choice of films selected is based on sub-generic consideration and on easy accessibility. Though the selected films are mostly those based on Anglophone African experience, this does not mean that they are the only ones constrained by colonialist African discourse. The tradition extends to the whole corpus of Euro-American films of the colonialist African genre. In fact, until Hollywood and European cinemas cultivate alternative modes of representing Africa, its peoples, and its cultural practices; until Afro-European relationships move into the realm of equal recognition of each others' cultural norms and values, until Europeans learn to recognise the humanity of Africans, their films set in Africa will continue to be constrained by colonialist thought.

5.4. A Critical Reading of Selected Colonialist African Films.

5.4.1. Colonialist Adventure Films.

Of the colonialist adventure films, the Tarzan jungle films need to be treated as a sub-genre if only in recognition of the sheer number of films based specifically on Tarzan's

adventures. James R. Nesteby asserts that there are over forty American made Tarzan films alone, and that

by 1918, film audiences clearly expected that Tarzan the white must lord it over the apes and the blacks and the beasts; the fact that Tarzan is indeed an English Lord by birth, Lord Greystoke, helps embed the contrast in black and white images (Nesteby, 1982: 142).

By 1919, the year of the worst outbreak of racial rioting in American history prior to the mid-sixties, *Tarzan of the Apes*, the first in the series of Tarzan jungle films, had become one of the six biggest money-making films (Nesteby: 38). Edgar Rice Burroughs, the man who created the Tarzan series of stories which later inspired one of the most derogatory cinematic representation of Africa, had never been to the continent nor was he ever genuinely interested in knowing it, its peoples and its cultural practices (Maynard: 27). To him, as well as to others of his ilk, the continent was a back-cloth onto which one could project one's superiority complexes as well as avenue for commercial gains. In this study, I shall be analysing the first sound Tarzan jungle film, *Tarzan the Ape Man* (W.S. Van Dyke, 1932) which starred the Olympic gold medalist swimmer, Johnny Weissmuller.

5.4.2. *Tarzan the Ape Man*.

The narrative of *Tarzan the Ape Man* is based on the search by Harry Holt (Neil Hamilton), James Parker (C. Aubrey Smith) and Jane Parker (Maureen O'Sullivan) for the legendary elephants' burial ground which is thought to contain a million pounds worth of ivory. In the course of their search, they stumble upon a white ape man, Tarzan (Johnny Weissmuller), deep in the forest and from there on, the narrative takes on an additional twist by incorporating romance between Tarzan and Jane. The search, which after many perilous obstacles results in the discovery of the elephants' burial ground consequently leads to the death of James Parker.

Tarzan the Ape Man is set in the post-abolitionist era when European explorers and travellers criss-crossed Africa in an attempt to gain access to the hinterland and promote legitimate trade in European manufactured goods in place of the discredited

slave trade. Those drawn to Africa at this period included explorers, anthropologists, missionaries, scientists, and seekers of wealth, attracted to the continent by tales of lost treasure lying buried somewhere in the hinterland. The James Parker expedition team can be grouped under the last category.

To gain a fair knowledge of the complex thoughts in operation in *Tarzan the Ape Man*, one needs to examine the predominating scientific thoughts in operation during the post-abolitionist era. As I earlier noted, the predominating thoughts of the period revolve around theories of racial evolution that placed Africans next to apes in the evolutionary chain. These theories served a dual purpose: first, they helped to legitimise the slave trade since Africans were considered sub-human, and second, they helped to lighten the burden of guilty conscience that followed the abolition of the slave trade. I will explain the link between racial theories and the European fascination with apes and Africans in the Tarzan series. Suffice it to stress at this point that racial theories were later elaborated into philosophical and anthropological discourses (Banton, 1987). With respect to Africa, in the realm of political thought, there emerged in the post-abolitionist era a combination of paternalistic humanitarianism that saw the salvation of Africa as tied to some sort of European imperial presence on the continent. Such political thoughts were inspired by both Social Darwinist theories and changes in the industrial outlook of both Europe and America. Europe and America had by this time expanded beyond the needs of slave labour and was instead in dire need of foreign markets and industrial raw materials. In the artistic and literary sphere, there emerged a romantic sensibility that sought to portray pre-colonial Africa as a continent of noble savages living in pastoral freedom and innocence before the slave trade (Brantlinger, 1986:189). *Tarzan the Ape Man* is a product of this romantic sensibility. It is a film caught on the boundary between its own imaginative world of an Africa of noble savages and wild hunting grounds where Europeans can roam about in adventurous spirit and the real Africa populated by indigenous people proud of their independence. Caught somewhere between its invented and romanticised world, and the real world it refuses to acknowledge, the adventures it promises continue to suffer

the intrusion of forces it refuses to acknowledge - indigenous people proud of their independence. This is the quintessential conflict at the centre of *Tarzan the Ape Man*.

Northrop Frye's essay on literary romance acknowledges the unattainable utopia that marks its nostalgic project, and his definition of the essential quality of the romantic genre is worth noting because it can be applied to the analysis of *Tarzan the Ape Man*. According to Frye, the romantic genre is plagued by a perennially child-like nostalgia or search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time and space, and its essential plot element is adventure. He also classifies the genre as possessing the quality of sequentiality or processional form which produces, at its most naive form, an endless series of works in which a character never develops or ages as he or she goes through one adventure after another. This is a quality very much characteristic of all the Tarzan series. Finally,

the complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a complete form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero...the central form of romance is dialectical: everything is focussed on the conflict between the hero and his enemy, and the reader's values are bound up with the hero. Hence the hero of romance is analogous to the mythical Messiah or deliverer (Frye, 1973: 187).

Most of the foregoing qualities elaborated by Frye can be found in *Tarzan the Ape Man*. The film begins with a shot of black men carrying ivory tusks. This is the symbol of the emergent legitimate trade and the new source of wealth which inspires the search for the elephants' burial ground - the main subject matter of the film's adventure. This is followed by the arrival of Jane and a group of people at James Parker's General Store. Parker is shown consulting an elderly man about the site of the burial ground: throughout the scene, the old man merely points at the map in front of him and mumbles "iyo" several times. When Jane arrives, she sees her father, Parker, sitting with his back to the door, looking at her picture. Feeling emotionally touched, she calls out saying hello. Parker turns and looks, without recognising her. At her second hello, he comes to realise that she is Jane. They embrace and after this emotional reunion, Jane says: "From now on I'm sick of civilisation. I will be a savage (meaning African)".

Shortly after this, Beamish (Forrester Harvey), Parker's cook, enters, excited to see Jane, who pats his cheeks as a mother will pat those of a child. Next, Holt enters and Parker introduces them. Jane tells Parker that they have already met. Holt calls the boys (African men) to bring her load in. Beamish goes to get her coffee. Holt teases Parker about the quantity of Jane's luggage and leaves. Jane remarks that she likes Holt and Parker tells her that he and Holt get on very well, that both of them are united by their hatred of Africa, and Jane replies that she does not believe that. She pulls off her gown and prepares to make up while Parker sits beside her, smelling the fragrance of her clothes. As she pulls off more dresses, he gets embarrassed and tries to get up and leave. She tells him that he will be embarrassing her if he leaves and begins to clean her face. At this point, they hear the voices of people singing outside. She moves toward the window and through her point-of-view shot, we see several people, some leading cattle, moving from the background of screen left towards the foreground of screen right. Parker joins her by the window and she asks him whom they are, and he tells her that they are the Macamba who have come to sell their produce. In the next point-of-view shot of Jane and Parker, we find a group of warriors wearing white-plum headgear, carrying shields and spears, moving from the background of screen right towards the foreground of screen left. All the while, we note Jane dressing up and excited about the spectacle outside. She moves towards the dressing table, puts on a helmet and moves outside, followed by Parker.

Looking at the traders dancing, Jane asks if they always sing and dance when they come to sell, and Parker replies that they always do, that they are praying to their gods to give them the best of the bargaining. Exclaiming, she replies that he has done far better than she had imagined, as if in acknowledgement of his worthy discovery. She then moves closer to the dancers to get a better view of them. From the dancers, she moves towards screen right where she looks at a group of women and children standing in a single file like soldiers mounting a guard of honour. Holt joins them there and remarks that Jane is already breaking into society. Holt takes her to a group of Masai warriors, referring to them as "boys", also standing in a single file. He tells her

that the marks on the warriors' shields indicate the number of people killed by each warrior. At this information, Jane exclaims excitedly in surprise saying: "Really!". He also shows her a group of Macamba warriors and dancers performing a courting/fertility dance. Parker tells Jane that they should be going, and she asks him about a group of elders sitting in an arch formation, wearing exotic head-gears, their faces painted, and smoking pipes.

Holt recognises the chief of the Luo, a man wearing a monstrous-looking head-gear, and exclaims that the old chief, Ntala, is in town, that possibly he can tell them where the burial ground is. Parker replies that the chief will not, that he has been trying to get the information from the chief for years. They look at them for a while and as they prepare to leave, Parker says he hopes when they (natives) are done with their dancing they will be in a good mood for some substantial trading. As they move away, Parker asks Jane if she remembers the story of the elephant burial ground and she replies she does and recounts it. Parker then tells her that the natives know where such a burial ground is but that they are forbidden to even look at it, that any native who breaks this taboo is put to death by the witch doctor of the tribe. He informs her that Holt and he, are searching for that burial ground. She asks what she can do to assist him and he replies that she is not physically fit enough for such an adventure. She then pleads with Holt to allow her and he agrees. Holt however asks her if she can shoot and she replies she can. She is given a gun and a hat which she throw and shoots before it falls to the ground. At the sound of the gun shot, the black servants scamper toward the house and Holt points at them laughing. The sequence ends after this incidence with a fade.

The opening sequence contains most of the conventions of colonialist African cinema. There is a parade of warriors with white plum-headgears, armed with shields and spears, and dance scenes containing both war and fertility dances. The whole of the dance scenes and the tone of conversation between Jane and Parker, are structured to give the Western spectator the false impression that Africans dance in procession to the market, to sell their farm produce. In addition, men, women, and children, are lined

up, as in a military guard of honour, for Jane to inspect. Throughout the dance scenes, the warriors, dancers, women, children, and elders, are made to look like mere objects of Jane's spectacle and pleasure. They are denied speech, and if the dance performance is taken outside the framework of pure entertainment for Jane, and by extension Western spectators, it will be difficult to justify its inclusion in the narrative. Towards the end of the sequence, the black servants are represented as people who have not heard gunshots before. This pattern of representation is adhered to throughout the rest of the film. In terms of spatial articulation, the spectator is not allowed spatial accessibility to the African characters since spatial articulation, especially in this sequence, is tied to the presence of Jane. It is only through her point-of-view shots or when she moves close to examine the dancers, warriors, women or elders that we gain access to them. As a result, African characters hover in the background and are anonymous when they not drawn into the spatial orbit of Jane.

Another fact that is also established in the opening sequence is the ambivalent nature of the romantic sensibility. Frye acknowledges the dialectical nature of the conflicting forces of romance as representative symbols of good and evil, but he neglects to add that these forces are played out in an ambivalent manner. In *Tarzan the Ape Man*, the ambivalent nature of the romantic drive is established right from the opening sequence when Jane arrives in Africa. In a conversation with her father, she says she is tired of civilised societies, that she wants to live a savage life, but the first thing she does immediately her luggage arrives, is to start making up - a humorous and ironic comment on her craving to escape from Western culture. The film is also fairly explicit on the question of who the good African is - he is the loyal and tame servant, Riano, the task master whose role invokes images of slave trade days when slave-traders and slave-foremen wielding whips, ensured that the white man's orders are carried out.

The main source of conflicts in the film is the threat posed to the adventure team by the indigenous population. The first of these conflicts is played out at the first camp in the forest at night. The sequence begins with comparative shots of the African

and European sections of the camp. Here, as well as in most other colonialist African films, Africans are portrayed in joyous singing mood in contrast to the European characters' meditation over how to locate the elephants' burial ground. Against the background of this singing, animal noises, and threatening persistent African drum sounds, the camera pans from one quarter of the camp to another only to rest momentarily on Jane's reaction to the whole atmosphere as she engages in conversation with Holt. As the drum-sound gets nearer the camp, the camera focuses on Jane, no longer pretending to enjoy the ominous sounds but scared stiff. This is followed by cuts from her to the pitch dark and threatening forest that surrounds them. A bloodied black man shouting "bwana", meaning master, bolts out of the dark forest pursued by his assailants. To protect him, Holt covers him up with a white cloth and sits on top of him, smoking his pipe. Shortly after that, his assailants emerge from the dark forest, done up exotically in white chalk, the symbolic make up for African ritual executioners in colonialist African films. Their leader, later identified by James Parker as the chief priest, challenges Holt to produce the man for execution. Holt denies that he is being sheltered at the camp. Frustrated and disappointed, they disappear into the dark forest from which they emerged. Shortly afterwards, Parker explains to his daughter that the man has broken an ethnic taboo and has been condemned to death. That taboo, from his explanation has to do with his attempt to show Parker the elephants' burial ground. The point of interest for Western spectators however, is the story of Africa's barbaric ritual murders. Unfortunately, by the time Parker is done with his tale of ritual murders in Africa, his treasured guide is found to be dead, having only vaguely pointed in a certain direction before collapsing.

In terms of imagery, Holt's use of a white cloth to cover the guide after which he sits on top of him carries a lot of significant meaning. It can be considered a metaphor for colonialism. The white cloth signifies a framework of European protection, but the fact that the guide dies from it also signifies the danger which underlies such protective framework. With respect to the narrative itself, from this point onwards, the expedition team stumbles from one obstacle to another, including

climbing steep mountainous cliffs where they lose one servant - and Jane is saved only by a rope secured to the waist of Holt after she falls - and crossing a crocodile infested river on rafts, where excited hippopotami, made aggressive by being shot at, savagely attack one of the rafts thereby setting up a scene for the portrayal of man-eating crocodiles. It turns out however that these crocodiles are discriminating species that specialise only in black men's flesh.

The highlight of *Tarzan the Ape Man* however is the discovery of a white ape man, Tarzan, living as king among apes deep in the tropical rain forest. This discovery shortly after crossing the crocodile and hippopotami-infested river, gives a different twist to the adventure. First, Jane is abducted by Tarzan during an attack on the expedition team by pygmies and falls in love with him, thereby heightening suspense in the film since earlier on, at the night camp sequence, Holt had tentatively proposed to her. Second, and perhaps most important, the simultaneous appearance of Tarzan, the apes and the pygmies in this film, carries a lot of significance because it represents the enactment of both the social and hierarchical orders of evolutionary theories in vogue during the post-abolitionist and colonial eras. The enactment is organised through a cross-cut of shots between Tarzan, the pygmies, and the apes, which places in perspective the comparative bodily configuration and social mentality between the apes and the pygmies on the one hand, and between Tarzan and the apes on the other. In this filmic enactment of evolutionary theories, the pygmies are placed symbolically in succession to the apes by virtue of bodily configuration and bestial behaviour in the film. In addition, they are also symbolically represented as the evolving line from which Africans can trace their roots since only height separates them from the pygmies. On the other hand, Tarzan with his animalistic gait, provides speculative possibilities of the missing link in the Darwinian chain with respect to Europeans. Third, this scene sets the stage for the realisation of the white supremacist ideas that underlie the film's narrative structure.

The idea of white supremacy is propagated through the character of Tarzan, Frye's archetypal mythical super hero and messiah, a white man who has perfected the

act of survival in the savage world of the animal kingdom. The Tarzan character is invested with all the super-human qualities that only the purveyors of white supremacist ideas could subscribe to. Tarzan is characterised as a white ape man who though totally cut off from his white race, still possesses some of the qualities of super-human nature that white supremacists ascribe to themselves. Swinging from tree to tree like apes and walking upright like humans in fast skipping steps, his only possession that makes him lord of the forest, is a hunting knife. How he came about possessing that knife, we are not told. What we do learn is that with the possession of that sole weapon, Tarzan is able to kill, without suffering much physical damage to himself, a leopard threatening his dwelling place and two lions in quick succession, once when he is out searching for food. Even though he has lived all his life alone with apes in the forest, he seems to possess the noble qualities of the well bred which can only be explained as product of the biological notion of genes and hereditary. When he attempts forcibly to seduce Jane and she protests, he voluntarily goes out to sleep in the cold open space in front of his tree-top dwelling place, another noble and gentlemanly quality. Furthermore, within the short period of their meeting, the narrative informs us that he is able to learn a few English phrases and also gain enough self-consciousness to know that his name is Tarzan. Surely, only a super-human person could have achieved such a feat within that short period. He is also portrayed as a protector of animal rights who saves elephants caught in traps set possibly by the pygmies. When in trouble, he knows how to summon his animal friends to his aid. But as a Darwinian creature, he also kills some of the animals in his kingdom for food.

The foregoing super-human qualities are fully realised within the overall context of the adventure story. I noted earlier that his discovery and consequent integration into the narrative serves to heighten the level of conflict and suspense in the film. This is done through the exploitation of the conflicts that arise as a result of Tarzan's abduction of Jane during the ambush by the pygmies. The fact that Holt has earlier proposed to Jane and that he is armed with a gun in contrast to Tarzan who has only a hunting knife but who has nevertheless wins the love and admiration of Jane

through his display of chivalrous gallantry, greatly increases the possibility of conflict, and by extension, of suspense. This conflict is played out when one of the apes guarding Jane is shot. This violent act not only shatters the peace of Tarzan's kingdom thoroughly but also symbolically represents the loss of innocence as far as the film's narrative is concerned. Where before Tarzan has stood dumbly by while a gun is being pointed at him without realising its implied dangers, where before he reacted indifferently to the presence of the expedition team in his kingdom, the termination of the grand ape's life by the gun shot, changes everything. From then onwards, he develops not only a self-preservative consciousness in presence of the team, but also a predatory and vengeful consciousness toward them.

As a result of the shooting of the ape, Tarzan in vengeance kills two of the black porters, a signification of the textual devaluation of African lives, thereby increasing Holt's determination to kill him. Jane intervenes and pleads that she should be allowed to appeal to Tarzan to halt the killing. Her voluntary return to Tarzan results in the blossoming of their relation and also witnesses the symbolic re-enactment of the Judeo-Christian mythical Garden of Eden tale and the noble savage tradition. The film creates this Garden of Eden atmosphere by focusing exclusively on the evolving love story between Jane and Tarzan in the forest. This love story, represented with all the trappings of its patriarchal world-outlook, depicts Jane happily luxuriating in the 'nest' built for her by Tarzan while he plays the role of hunter-gatherer searching for fruits and meat in the forest. The Edenic setting, reserved exclusively for them, comprises the whole forest with its wild fruits, various animal species, and a nearby pool where Olympic gold medalist swimmer Johnny Weissmuller exhibits his swimming prowess. The sequence ends with a cut to James Parker and his team searching for Jane. Her voluntary departure from Tarzan, this time with his consent, symbolises the establishment of a bond between her and Tarzan. When they are later re-ambushed and captured by the pygmies, this bond enables Tarzan to intervene and effectively realise his role as a messianic saviour of the team. I want to examine the sequence dealing with the capture of Jane and other members of the adventure team

because it is the climax of the film and uses a lot of the metaphors associated with African bestiality.

The sequence begins with the capture of members of the adventure team, including Jane, by the pygmies who take them to their village. Their arrival at the village is greeted with singing and dancing, amidst lowering down of the gate of the village. This is followed by a brief medium close up of a man, possibly the traditional ruler, casting an evil look at the captives as they are led into a prison. In the prison, there is a huge pit inside of which there is a giant ape. Opposite the pit, there is a grand stand packed with ropes wielding pygmies singing and dancing. They throw the ropes across the pit to fetch the prisoners one by one into the pit for the giant ape to strangle. As it strangles the prisoner, there is a cut to the pygmies dancing happily and making gestures suggesting that the ape should squeeze harder. This whole macabre scene is represented as some sort of sport for the pygmies. The prisoners are fetched inside the pit, beginning with the black guides. The scene climaxes when Jane is fetched into the pit and Holt jumps in to save her. The ape throws Holt to the side of the pit and Parker jumps in with a burning stick and tries to use its flame to burn the ape. It disarms Parker and throws him out of the pit. This is followed by a cut to Tarzan, swinging from tree to tree and racing to Jane's rescue, having been informed by Cheeta, Tarzan's friend, that she is in danger. In a cut back to the pit, we find the ape carrying Jane in its arm. Just then, Tarzan arrives, looks into the pit, sees Jane in the ape's arm, removes his knife from his side and jumps into the pit. He attacks the ape with the knife but it throws him down. As it goes again for Tarzan, Cheeta (the young ape), his friend, jumps on the ape to distract its attention. It gets hold of Cheeta, swings Cheeta round its head, smashes it at the side of the pit and throws Cheeta out of the pit. As the ape makes for Tarzan a third time, he picks up his knife and throws it into the ape's forehead. Holt carries Jane out of the way. Tarzan then jumps at the ape from behind, pulls the knife from the ape's forehead and uses it to jab at the ape until it slumps to the ground. Having killed the ape, he calls the elephants in a triumphant wail. On seeing that the ape is dead, the pygmies begin to shoot at the captives with bows and arrows.

They however use the dead ape as shield. This is followed by a cut to a pygmy sentry blowing a horn made of ivory on sighting the elephants racing towards their village. On hearing the sound, the pygmies at the stand begin to flee. The elephants tear down the fence of the village and rescue Tarzan and the team. The sequence ends with the team's departure for the elephants' burial ground.

The capture of the expedition team by the pygmies can be considered as part of the strategy of incorporating exotic elements into the narrative since their appearance, short rotund shiny bodies, represents departures from the norm even by the standards of colonialist African cinema. But apart from this physical deviation from the norm, they also symbolise the unconscious interjection of the counter-narrative currents represented by indigenous opposition to colonial presence. This climactic sequence is however devoted entirely to the exploration of stereotypical themes such as African sadism and childishness. In terms of representation, it involves the simultaneous denial and representation of the fundamental implicit native opposition to colonialism as some sort of trifle and sadistic child-sport. In line with this mode of representation, the narrative refuses to acknowledge why the team is captured and when they arrive at the pygmies' kingdom, no formal case is held against them, only a momentary shot of an evil gaze meant to represent that of the ruler is offered. In this classic example of colonialist trivialisation of native opposition to imperial presence, the picture we have before us becomes one that reduces this fundamental opposition to sadistic childish sport. To fully complement this picture, shots of pygmies wielding human-bones, an indication that they are cannibals, are incorporated into the frame. There is also an underlining fear of miscegnation in the sequence, especially, in the image of the giant ape carrying Jane in its arm - an image that is fully exploited in *King Kong*.

In conclusion, *Tarzan the Ape Man*, is a romantic film caught in the ambivalent desire to simultaneously denounce and acknowledge the qualities of industrial societies through racial affirmation. Despite its overt racist tone, the film occasionally incorporates elements of counter-discourse, though in most cases, it does so through

inversion as for example, the presentation of native opposition to colonialism as some sort of sadistic childish sport. However through this unconscious incorporation of implicit counter-discourse, the idea that Africa is one huge jungle and adventure ground, a symbolic "Garden of Eden", inhabited by wild animals where white adventurers can roam about unchallenged is questioned.

5.4.3. *King Solomon's Mines.*

In her essay, "The Dark Continent: Africa as Female Body in Haggard's Adventure Fiction", Rebecca Stott states that almost "all of Haggard's romances involve the quest motif: usually a band of men must journey into the centre of Africa in search of something or someone" (Stott, 1989: 71). I will go even further to say that the quest motif is central to most adventure films set in Africa. It provides the main framework upon which *Tarzan the Ape Man*, *The African Queen*, *Mogambo*, etc., are based. Stott, like Frye, also acknowledges the centrality of the perilous experience to the quest. According to Stott, the quest is usually full of danger and requires the physical and moral strengths of those involved to be tested at every stage of the journey. The quest motif becomes in essence, a quest for and initiation into manhood, a confirmation of virility (Stott, *ibid.*). Even though *King Solomon's Mines* (Robert Stevenson and Geoffrey Barkas, 1937) is not an all-male affair, since there is Kathy O'Brien (Anna Lee), its narrative structure is centred on the quest motif. The quest in this case, is for the legendary King Solomon's Mines that are supposed to contain secret chambers full of mined diamonds.

King Solomon's Mines is a melodramatic adventure freely adapted from Haggard's novel and it is the first of three versions so far inspired by the novel. The story revolves around the hunt for lost treasures of the sort we have already met in *Tarzan the Ape Man*. And as in *Tarzan*, there is an underlying story of paternal desire to increase the inheritance of a loved daughter. In the case of *King Solomon's Mines*, the adventure story is driven by Patrick O'Brien's desire to accumulate wealth for his daughter, Kathy.

The storyline is straight forward: Kathy O'Brien (Anna Lee) and her father, Patrick (Arthur Sinclair), are stranded in Kimberly after they have tried unsuccessfully to sell a fake diamond. They beg and get a lift from Allan Quartermain (Cedric Hardwicke), a well-known hunter, who is on his way to meet two clients, Commander Good (Roland Young) and Sir Henry Curtis (John Loder). On their way, they come upon a dying man, Jose Sylvestra (Arthur Goullett), who informs them that he is on his way to the legendary King Solomon's Mines. Shortly after his death, they find among his possessions, a map showing the location of the mines. Patrick O'Brien leaves at night in search of the mines. From this point onward, the narrative becomes complex, having taken on the additional story of a daughter's search for her father. A search party comprising Sir Henry Curtis, Commander Good, and Allan Quartermain set out in search of Kathy. Having caught up with her, they offer to assist her in her search for her father with the assistance of the native guide Umbopa (Paul Robeson) who, it turns out, is the rightful heir to the throne of Kukuanaland. After transversing the harsh conditions of the desert where they nearly die of thirst, they finally arrive at the mountain-pass that leads to the mines. There they are taken prisoners and brought before the throne-usurping king, Twala (Robert Adams), who rules Kukuanaland with the assistance of his spell-casting councillor, the aged witch, Gagool (Sydney Fairbrother). Gagool schemes for their death but Allan Quartermain neutralises her plans by successfully countering her "black" magic with his "white" magic, offered by way of accurately predicting a scientifically forecast eclipse of the sun. A succession warfare follows during which Twala is killed and the rightful heir to the throne, Umbopa, is installed as king. Finally, they go into the mines but are trapped by Gagool, who herself perishes in an eruption inside the mines. Kathy and her search party are saved by Umbopa after successfully rescuing her father. Patrick O'Brien, in show of appreciation, offers to share his diamonds with other members of the team since the mine is buried in the inferno that follows the volcanic eruption.

As in *Tarzan the Ape Man*, spatial representation in *King Solomon's Mines* is decidedly colonialist in nature, and like its narrative, is aimed at geographic exploration

of the unfamiliar and the exotic. The camera is used to map the landscape as the journey progresses through veldt, desert and mountainous regions, into the thick rain forest. The whole process involves making the African landscape look familiar through filmic exploration. The fundamental drive for this mode of cinematography, as earlier stated, is the desire to exploit the geographic otherness of the landscape for the specular pleasures of Western spectators. Thus once the adventure party moves into the open country, the short rapid cuts of the opening sequence give way to a combination of long takes and frequent slow pans as the company unwinds its way from the open country, through desert, into the thick rain forest.

In all of this journey, the African landscape is symbolically cast as a personal adversary that must be conquered in the search for self-fulfilment. In this regard, the spiritual symbolisation of the journey into the hinterland of Africa can be compared to an inward journey into oneself, a journey that involves exploring the unfamiliar regions of one's mind. Here spiritual vacuity is symbolised as desert while turbulent thoughts are represented by all manner of native threat. But in addition to such a metaphysical reading of the text, there are enough visual details that physically represent the threat to explorers of unfamiliar regions. These visual details represent part of the perilous experience of the romantic genre (Frye: 187). They include both the visible and invincible forces at interplay in the film text. By visible forces, I mean the physical obstacles like desert, mountains and forest, that are represented in the narrative; and by invincible forces, I mean the presence of indigenous people resentful of foreign intrusion which the text refuses to acknowledge directly as such, but instead disguises as an intra-ethnic succession contest. For instance, the colonialist tone of the film is established right from the opening sequence when in response to Kathy's observation that she sighted somebody in the horizon, Allan Quartermain replies by saying that what she is looking at, is open and uninhabited country. The term "uninhabited country", I should like to observe, is a colonialist term used by Europeans to legitimise the forcible occupation or settling of lands. Of course, the film is silent on the geo-political significance of the intrusion into a foreign land; instead, it represents it in

narrative terms, as the natural threat of invincible forces. In furtherance of this colonialist perception, when the hunting team arrives in the forest region, Sir Henry Curtis surveys the land and concludes that they are in uninhabited country, thus recalling Quartermain's observation of the opening sequence. This last observation is however marked by ironic contradiction because shortly after his observation, the land becomes activated as it reveals its unacknowledged inhabitants.

Another visual detail established in the opening sequence is the feminisation of the African landscape. This is visually captured through filmic exploration of maps and cartographic illustrations designed to make the landscape look feminine. For instance, in *King Solomon's Mines*, the actual act of penetration of the hinterland, is preceded by a scrutiny of the map of the terrain. The camera is positioned like a search-light as it probes the cartographic illustrations from the plains through Sheba's Breasts, down King Solomon's Road, to a triangle of mountains, with feminine sculptural adornments at the gate of the mines. In keeping with this mode of representation, the actual entering of the mines, guarded by the bat-like ageless witch, Gagool, which physically involves entering the womb of the earth, can be symbolically likened to nostalgia for one's original home in the female womb during conception. In addition, shots of the interior of the mines structured like a series of smouldering catacombs with craters and frothing lava, can be considered as a symbolic representation of fear of the female body as well as of hell. As in every adventure story, the intention is simultaneously to scare the faint-hearted as well as grant them access to the experiences intrinsic to heroic acts, and as in most colonialist African films, *King Solomon's Mines*, is organised around a cinematic scheme of comparison that portrays Africans as people with inferior behavioural attitudes such as preoccupation with singing and dancing, and Europeans as endowed with rationality and reason. For instance, in the opening sequence of the film, contrasting shots of Allan Quartermain's camp at night, show the African quarters of the camp alive with songs and merry-making while the Europeans in their quarter are shown deeply engrossed in the analysis of maps and calculations on how to locate King Solomon's Mines. These contrasting shots, also present in the

forest camp scenes in *Tarzan the Ape Man*, help to portray Africans as emotionally expressive people bereft of rational reasoning.

In tandem with this inferior/superior comparative narrative structure, the battle sequence pitches European war strategies and weapons against those of Africa in an attempt to show the superiority of the former and inferiority of the latter. Thus while the European war camp is portrayed as building ramparts, and positioning fighters for effective fighting, the African war camp is depicted as lacking any war strategy. While Europeans fight in formations, Africans are shown planlessly pouring into the battle ground without formations, sustained only by unmitigated frenzy that usually ends in massacre. In this game of violence, the Europeans are shown as the good men backing the forces of righteousness by fighting on the side of their lackey, Umbopa, the rightful heir to the throne, while Twala's warriors are portrayed as the bad men fighting to sustain the evil rule of a fake king. The battle sequence climaxes in the fight between Sir Henry Curtis, and Twala, in which Curtis, representing the forces of good, kills Twala thereby making it possible for Umbopa, the rightful heir, to ascend to the throne. Here, as well as in *Sanders of the River*, which also features Paul Robeson in a similar role, we find his white masters assisting him to ascend to position of authority. In fairness to Robeson, much of the film's success can be attributed to his acting as well as singing prowess. His performance of the songs, "I'm not Afraid" and "Climbing Up" with its refrain of "Mighty Mountain!" are powerfully rendered. In keeping with his star status in the film, mostly low angle shots that frame a proportionally larger-than-life image of him against the skyline, especially in the scenes where he is singing, are utilised, thereby lending an air of vitality to the weariness and drudgery of the trek into Kukuanaaland.

The film also adheres to colonialist African cinematic conventions in its utilisation of traditional African costumery and dances. In the battle sequence for instance, the African soldiers are exotically dressed up in the emblematic battle gear of colonialist African films: these include a white plum-headgear, bows and arrows, spears and shields. Like the exotic battle gear, the dances included in this film are

performed out of context, their inclusion is strictly borne out of the desire to cater for the visual pleasure of Western spectators. Furthermore, while *mise-en-scène* in *King Solomon's Mines* can be qualified as effectively handled, especially with regards to scenes like those involving dances and meetings, both in terms of exterior and interior decor positioning as well as in terms of the general set-up of the staging space, it is nonetheless constrained by the conventions of colonialist African films. For instance, the set of the dance sequence which has the stage situated in an arena-like space fenced in by several huts, has the entrance to the king's hut adorned with human skulls, the iconographic representations of cannibalism.

In sum, *King Solomon's Mines* fully exploits the conventions of the colonialist romantic genre. It utilises most of the characteristic traits of the romantic genre which Frye identifies as comprising the quest motif together with its perilous journeys and the romance; the nostalgia for setting in "unspoilt nature"; the comparative opposition of a set of moral values, and the triumph of good over evil, with its element of messianism. In addition to its romantic vision, the film also adheres to the conventions of colonialist African films which require the portrayal of Africans and African cultural practices as inferior in comparison to their European counterparts. Thus while the pattern of representation in *King Solomon's Mines* may be said to meet the entertainment requirements of those Western spectators in search of exotica, the narrative is constrained by colonialist African discursive practices which require the setting up of Africans as objects of the Westerner's gaze and visual pleasure, and whose subjecthood can only be defined as such or through special paternalist beneficence.

5.4.4. *The African Queen.*

Of all the colonialist films set in Africa, none reflect better the intra-European conflicts and rivalries that attended the scramble for Africa than *The African Queen*. In this film, the continent is represented in gendered cinematic idioms within a romantic framework as was the case in *King Solomon's Mines*, but beside the feminisation of the landscape, the romance has been nuanced in such a way that the intra-European conflicts and

rivalries set up Africa as a treasured bride, symbolically represented in the film as "The African Queen", albeit one under the protection of British imperial authority. The other major suitor vying for the possession of Africa in the film is Germany whose power is symbolised by her frigate, "The Louisa". The film is set within the context of the outbreak of the First World War in what was then German East Africa. The main theatre of war is of course Europe, but what the film attempts to do is to set up Germany as a villain both in the war and in her colonial enterprise in Africa.

Germany's villainy is established in the opening sequence of the film which depicts the rampage of her colonial forces. But beside showing Germany as a villain, the film also propagates such themes as patriotism and loyalty to one's country in times of war as well as representing Africans as barbaric, indolent and unpatriotic. The whole romance between Charles Allnut (Humphrey Bogart) and Rose Sayer (Katharine Hepburn) is aimed at propagating the theme of patriotism and loyalty to Britain during the First World War. At the outset of the film for instance, Charles is a plain mine-worker/mail-runner with little concern for nationalism and all its attendant jingoism, but after fate consigns him with Rose after the destruction of their church by the rampaging German colonial forces, she convinces him of the necessity of helping the British cause in her war with Germany. The conflict which is symbolically played out in "The African Queen's" sinking of "The Louisa", shows how British ingenuity triumphs over German armament.

What is of interest to me in this film, however, is the manner in which the intra-European conflicts are extended to Africa and how the film represents the role of Africans in it. The film utilises gendered cinematic idioms in which the continent is symbolically represented in feminine terms as a queen with contesting imperial suitors - Britain and Germany. The film of course proposes Britain as the worthy suitor by portraying Germany as a villainous colonial power whose forces destroy villages and send Africans to concentration camps. But in addition to portraying its rival as an unworthy suitor, the film also portrays Africans as simpletons helping the Germans to

destroy their own people. This unpatriotic behaviour is therefore subtly contrasted with the nationalist fervor of Charles and Rose.

Apart from portraying Africans as unpatriotic elements with regards to the war, the film also adheres to the general conventions of colonialist African cinema in the representation of Africans. The whole of the opening sequence which establishes the African atmosphere of the film, is dedicated to the recycling of stereotypical images of Africans. The church service scenes are full of such representations. For example, shots of the church congregation are structured in a contrasting pattern with the African members of the congregation deprived of any comprehensible speech. They are shown mumbling in an incomprehensible manner in order to highlight the burden of missionary work. Amidst these rapid contrastive shots which show Reverend Samuel Sayer (Robert Morley) and Rose Sayer trying desperately to retain the attention of the congregation, the sound of "The African Queen's" horn is heard and is shown to distract the congregation. Several shots of them looking childishly toward the direction of the sound of the horn are contrasted with that of Reverend Sayer and Rose singing frantically in an effort to retain their attention. The sound of the horn is shown to affect men, women, and children even though the narrative suggests that the steamboat is a regular caller at the village.

Before the boat is anchored, there are more shots of elderly African men running - a most unlikely thing for an African elder to do - towards "The African Queen" to receive from Charles gifts of cigar. After greeting them paternalistically, Charles moves to the front of the church where more interior shots reveal the helplessness of Sayer and Rose to contain the excited converts. Things come to a climax when Charles stylishly throws his cigar stub toward a group of adolescents seated indolently on the ground in front of the church. Even before the stub lands, expertly choreographed shots of both boys and men scrambling for the stub are shown. This is followed by a cut to shots of the arrival of the German colonial forces made up of Africans with German officers. The leading unpatriotic role which the African

conscripts play in the burning of the village helps to reinforce the earlier image of childishness and indolence which the film had established in the preceding scenes.

In addition to the adoption of colonialist textual conventions in the representation of Africans, there is also a noticeable influence of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in the representation of the African landscape. Most of the colonialist regime of representation found in this novel is visually replicated in this film. The most common feature of this style of representation include sailing in a steamboat through turbulent water-ways bounded on both sides by thick tropical vegetation. In place of Africans that shoot arrows and throw spears at Marlow's steamboat from the shore, the film puts a German colonial force, made up principally of African recruits with German officers, who fire rifles at Charles and Rose, but the savagery this was meant to reflect cannot be lost on spectators familiar with Conrad's poetic description of a lonely steamboat sailing through an equally lonely but unpredictable river bounded by tropical forestation.

The sailing sequence with its perilous elements is shot mostly in long takes, slow pans and long shots. This gives the film a slow leisurely tempo. The long takes show the river as a very calm bluish body of water with thick greenish vegetation. Occasionally, there is a slow pan of the greenish riverbank almost from the water level as the steamboat glides along. This style of filming serve a dual purpose: on the one hand, it cinematically documents the flora and fauna of the landscape for the visual pleasure of Western spectators, on the other hand, it represents an ironic comment upon the beauty of the water and the landscape. The subtlety of the style lies in the fact that this bluish body of calm water set within thick greenish vegetation with a clear blue skyline will be revealed to be a mask for its dangerous hidden cavernous rapids and gullies. The long takes depicting the calm river therefore serve as a metaphor for representing the deceptiveness of the outward appearances of African landscapes. It is a style also effectively used in the opening sequence of *Men of Two Worlds* where ironic inversion is adopted in the representation of the landscape. This ambivalent style of representation falls within the general conventions of colonialist African cinema. In

Men of Two Worlds, the beautiful landscape is shown to be infested with the sleeping sickness carrier, tsetse fly, while in *The African Queen*, the beautiful calm river is shown to be a deceptive mask for hidden dangerous rapids. Furthermore, as in most colonialist African films, the landscape is symbolically represented as a personal adversary that must be defeated as part of the self-fulfilling aspect of the adventure. The romance between Charles and Rose is realised out of the circumstantial difficulties in which they find themselves. If the romance is captivating in the end, it is because we realise that it has withstood the test of the clash of two strong-willed personalities and of a treacherous environment.

In sum, *The African Queen* is a nationalistic romance set within the context of the colonial rivalries between Britain and Germany at the outbreak of the First World War. The nationalist romance has its captivating moments when circumstantial difficulties help to break down Rose's image of a sexless missionary spinster and transforms Charles from a simple-minded hard-drinking mine worker into a war hero. But in the representation of Africa, its vision of patriotism is blurred by the constraints of colonialist African filmic conventions as it portrays Africans as simpletons and indolent children, and the African landscape as a treacherously deceptive landscape.

5.5. Colonial Burden Films.

Colonial burden films are essentially films that propagate the necessity for colonial rule. For this reason, many of them tend to rationalise colonialism through a derogatory portrayal of institutions that obstruct the free flow of the colonial system. Historically speaking, the greatest opposition to colonial rule prior to the emergence of Western educated nationalists, came from African traditional rulers. As a result of this, most of the films situated in this era tend to represent traditional African rulers as despotic and barbaric. Through this method of representation, the case for colonial presence is legitimated. However, in the process of legitimating colonial presence, the films also paradoxically expose the fragility of the whole system because of the potential for the slippage of Africans into barbarism in the absence of colonial

authority. The strategy is of course to rationalise colonial presence, but it is a strategy that also inadvertently exposes the fragility of colonial rule. Evidence of this textual pattern can be glimpsed from *Sanders of the Rivers*, *Four Feathers*, *Old Bones of the River*, *Men of Two Worlds*, *Mister Johnson* etc. This pattern will become clearer in my analysis of *Sanders of the River*.

5.5.1. *Sanders of the River*.

Among the films that I have categorised as colonial burden films, *Sanders of the River* (1935), Zoltan Korda's film version of Edgar Wallace's popular stories book of the same title, can today be considered as a classic in the sub-genre. *Sanders of the River* was conceived by its producer, Alexander Korda, the director's elder brother, as part of an imperial trilogy that also include *The Drum* and *The Four Feathers*. Of the three films, one, *The Drum*, was set outside Africa in India.

Most of the reputed success of *Sanders of the River* can be traced to the fact that it was one of the very first set of films, in this sub-genre of colonialist African films, to deal with such a historically relevant subject matter as the potential problems of an archetypal colonial administrator at a time when the British had commenced colonial administration in Africa. Its success can also be traced to the elaborate use of Yoruba artistic carvings as objects of scenic decoration both in Commissioner Sander's office, in Mofalaba's court, and in Bosambo's private dwelling, its use of erotic African fertility dances in the sequence dealing with the marriage of Bosambo and Lilongo, and its elaborate use of songs and dances. All these combine to satisfy the entertainment needs of a broad spectrum of spectators. The film is reputed to have been so successful that after its 1935 exhibition, it was re-issued in 1938, 1943 and 1947. A stage version, *The Sun Never Sets*, which also starred Leslie Banks was inspired by the film. Paul Robeson's recording of the "Canoe Song" also became a hit record (Richards and Aldgate, 1983: 25). Richards and Aldgate also state that the "box-office success of *Sanders* was such as to inspire Korda to produce *The Drum* (1938), set in India, and *The Four Feathers* (1939), set in the Sudan" (Richards and Aldgate, *ibid.*).

The film begins with Commissioner Sanders (Leslie Banks), who has been peacefully ruling a set of communities living on the estuaries of a river in West Africa for several years without leave, preparing to go on an annual leave to enable him finalise his wedding plans. Commissioner Ferguson (Martin Walker) is sent to relieve him. But before he proceeds on leave, Bosambo (Paul Robeson), a Liberian ex-convict who has unofficially manipulated himself into position of chief of the Ochori, comes to seek official approval from Sanders. Sanders, playing the benevolent fatherly role, officially confers upon Bosambo the title of chief of the Ochori after chastising him for his naughty past behaviour. Immediately Sanders goes on leave, the gin and gun-runners, Farini (Marquis de Portago) and Smith (Eric Maturin), spread the rumour that Sanders is dead. Ferguson, sensing that trouble is afoot, leaves for the Old King's country, on a peace mission, where he is murdered by King Mofalaba (Tony Wane). Not yet done, Mofalaba, who has been peeved by Bosambo's audacious obstruction of his slave raids into neighbouring ethnic groups, plots his elimination now that his white master and protector, Sanders, is out of the way, by kidnapping Bosambo's wife Lilongo (Nina Mae McKinney) so as to lure Bosambo into his trap. Bosambo falls for the trap and he is captured. On learning of all these developments, Sanders who had been waiting for an auspicious moment to bring King Mofalaba to justice, sails up river in his steamboat, "The Zaire", and arrives just on time to free the captives. The film ends with King Mofalaba being killed and Bosambo installed in his place.

As earlier stated, one of the reasons why *Sanders of the River* was successful was because of the choice of subject matter, the problems of an archetypal colonial administrator, especially those who served in Africa. This choice of theme and characterisation helped to strengthen the narrative and I shall accordingly start my analysis through examination of its central character, Commissioner Sanders. Richards and Aldgate state that

the characteristics that Sanders embodies are entirely in line with the criteria actually employed to select colonial administrators. The selection was virtually controlled from 1910 to 1947 (with the exception of World War 1 period) by one man - Sir Ralph Furse. Furse selected

his men specifically on the basis of character and recruited them mainly from public schools (Richards and Aldgate: 16).

Furse himself is famous for stating that without the calibre of men like Sanders, Britain would not have been able to run such a vast empire with a small band of men. In addition, he observed that "In England, universities train the mind; the public schools train character and teach leadership" (cited by Richards and Aldgate: 16). On their part, Richards and Aldgate state that the "public school taught duty and responsibility; a sense of fair play, qualities of leadership, above all a benevolent paternalism" (ibid). To qualify for recruitment as a District Commissioner, one would supposedly have served one's apprenticeship years as a school prefect or have held leadership positions in voluntary organisations like the Boy Scouts or Boys' Brigade.

The character of Sanders is therefore drawn to embody all the foregoing qualities. He is fair and firm toward his subordinates; he is mild mannered and good humoured in the presence of his superiors; above all, he is benevolently paternalistic toward his subjects like Bosambo and the local chiefs appointed by him. Leslie Banks' interpretation of the role of Commissioner Sanders was deemed to be so realistically carried out that the Colonial Office came to project the Sanders character as a role-model for newly recruited District Commissioners. One of them, Charles Allen, has explicitly recorded the central role played by this film in the lives of newly recruited District Commissioners:

Most of us had seen a film called *Sanders of the River* before we went out, and suddenly here was the thing, and it was real, one was walking behind a long line of porters - and it was just like the film. (Richards and Aldgate: 17).

Another talked of the "*Sanders of the River* touch" in the description of the conduct of his duties (Richards and Aldgate: ibid). The character of Sanders was therefore set up as an ideal model to which all would-be District Commissioners can aspire. Since Sanders is the model character and protagonist, all other characters in the film tend to be defined in relation to him. Sanders is also the symbol of the uneven Afro-European power relations in this text. The measuring scale of both contending levels of authority is represented on opposing poles by Mofalaba on the African side and Sanders on the

British. The sequence which most graphically represents this uneven Afro-European power relations is that which deals with the meeting between Sanders and King Mofalaba after the first slave raid. I want to examine this sequence to show how power is projected in the text.

The sequence begins with a shot of soldiers standing on guard with their bayonnetted rifles at the ready. This is followed by a cut to Sanders, Tibbet, and Bosambo. Sanders orders the soldiers to stand at attention as Bosambo points with his spear towards King Mofalaba arriving in an entourage of armed warriors. Three of them then sit to await Mofalaba's arrival - Sanders and Tibbet sit on chairs, and Bosambo sit on the ground beside Sanders. As Mofalaba's entourage gets closer, the soldiers adjust themselves with their bayonnetted rifles pointing aggressively towards them. This is followed by a cut back to King Mofalaba riding in a hammock. The entourage arrives at the meeting ground chanting a war song and a chair is placed down for the King. Sanders gets up to acknowledge his arrival, both of them bow to each other and they sit down, with King Mofalaba sitting opposite Sanders. A hot exchange then ensues between them, beginning with Sanders telling him that he called him to palaver (meeting) but not with his warriors, and King Mofalaba replying that the guard of Sanders' little chief (Bosambo) killed the captain of his guard. Sanders replies that Mofalaba's captain heard his orders but did not obey them. Mofalaba reminds Sanders that he promised that they (Sanders' subjects) should keep their customs. He informs Sanders that it is one of their old customs to buy women. Sanders agrees but adds that he permitted that only if the woman and the father consent. He warns Mofalaba that he will not tolerate slavery in his district. Mofalaba responds by reminding Sanders that his (Mofalaba's) forefathers have ruled the area for three hundred years, that he is the greatest King in the country. Sanders replies that his King is the greatest King on earth, that if little Kings and Chiefs disobey his King's order then he (Sanders) will remove them from their thrones.

At the end of this hot exchange, Mofalaba pauses and then asks Sanders what he wants. Sanders tells him to take his spear and men back to his (Mofalaba's) country

and he (Sanders) will release Mofalaba's men in his prison. Mofalaba replies that he will do what Sanders want because both of them are friends, but that he has nine war drums over which are stretched the skins of any chief who offends him. Casting an evil look at Bosambo, he adds that he knows the skin that will be stretched on the tenth. Sanders then warns him that if he touches one servant of his King, be it as little as a pigeon, then Mofalaba won't be King any longer. He adds, as a measure of finality, that the meeting is finished. Both of them get up and as Mofalaba prepares to leave, he casts an evil look at Bosambo. The entourage leaves amidst humming and Tibbet observes that he will be delighted to wring the King's neck, to which Sanders replies that the British tax payers wont be delighted. When Tibbet asks why, Sanders replies that it will cost about one million pounds to do that, that war is an expensive thing.

Throughout this sequence, the authority of Sanders is visibly displayed. His soldiers are positioned at the meeting ground to respond to any eventuality should the meeting degenerate into confrontation. But even though Sanders has his troops on stand-by for the meeting, to intimidate Mofalaba, he disapproves of Mofalaba's right to self-defence. Authority and power is what is on display in this sequence. But this authority and power is, in the context of this sequence, tied to military prowess. From the way Sanders exercises power in this sequence, we know that British authority and power is established in the district through military superiority. It is this military superiority that gives Sanders the sole authority to undermine indigenous power structures as well as appoint British Warrant Chiefs. With respect to the representation of African culture, the payment of bride price is deliberately linked in the narrative with the institution of slavery so that the condemnation of slavery is used to denigrate marital customs. This linkage is fully exercised in the Bosambo-Lilongo marriage sequence where Sanders uses his position as the sole authority in the district to impose a European concept of marriage, one man, one wife, upon Bosambo. In keeping with the conventions of colonialist African cinema, King Mofalaba is represented as a barbaric despot who will go to any extent to impose his authority on his subjects, including killing and stretching the skins of disloyal chiefs over his drums. In terms of

spatial articulation, the dialogue between Sanders and Mofalaba is shot in shot/reverse shots, with a brief cut to Bosambo's reaction shot when Mofalaba says he knows the skin which will be stretched on his tenth drum. Though Sanders does not enjoy more spatial authority than Mofalaba in this sequence, the strength and authority of his speech reflects the imbalance of power between him and Mofalaba.

The relationship between both contending levels of authority is therefore based on suspicion, tension and violence. Sanders is always suspicious that the King is trying to undermine his authority while the King sees the appointment of Warrant Chiefs who owe allegiance to the British colonial authorities as undermining his right to appoint Chiefs. Characterisation also reflects the general conventions of colonialist African discourse in which collaborators like Bosambo become the good African and traditional rulers like Mofalaba, who oppose British imperial presence, however self-centred such opposition may be, become the bad African. But ironically too, the good African is the one who is treated with a lot of condescension, since the relationship between him and his British patrons is based on master-servant relationship not on equality. For instance, the Bosambo character is tolerated and patronised by Sanders. When he appears before Sanders in the opening sequence of the film, for the purpose of the conferment of the title of chief of Ochori, he remains standing while being addressed like a child summoned before his father or headmaster. To reduce him further in stature, Paul Robeson's huge frame notwithstanding, Sanders invokes his criminal past. This criminal past refers to his activities in Liberia. The fact that he is portrayed as a Liberian ex-convict symbolically links him up with Africans in diaspora, especially to African-Americans, since Liberia was created as a settlement colony for freed slaves of United States origin.

As a Warrant Chief, Bosambo is a servant of British imperial authority. The chain of authority that dangles from his neck was often perceived by Africans during colonial era as a symbol of collaboration. They were often perceived as pets of British imperialism, hence when confronted by Bosambo during a slave raid, the Captain of the Old King's warriors addresses Bosambo in terms used for pets by saying: "Whose

dog are you?" However, as puppets of British imperialism, Warrant Chiefs enjoyed a lot of privileges. Beside wielding enormous authority on behalf of the British, their children enjoyed privileged education, thereby helping to perpetuate the tradition of a two-tier education system, with special elite schools forming the upper level, reserved for children of the emergent ruling class. This was how the idea of elite schools like Federal Government Colleges and Government Colleges was sown in countries like Nigeria. Bosambo is therefore reflecting this historical trend when he tells his wife, Lilongo, that if they persevere and remain in their present post, their children will have the opportunity to attend special schools for the children of Chiefs.

In terms of characters' relationships, Sanders relates to Bosambo as well as other African characters in paternal terms. He supervises Bosambo's marriage to Lilongo and specifies the type of marriage by insisting upon one wife, one certificate. In line with this paternal relationship, when Lilongo is kidnapped by King Mofalaba and Bosambo is going to seek her release, he sends his children to Sanders to be brought up as wards of the government just in case Mofalaba kills him in the mission. Furthermore, in comparison to Sanders, who has kept his sexual and marital life under control, the Bosambo character, as well as other African characters, are portrayed as sexually promiscuous people. For instance, the scene that precedes the rescuing of the slave girls, depicts Bosambo and the girls as sexually loose persons. In his inquiry before ordering the return of the girls to their families, with the exception of Lilongo whom he permits to marry Bosambo, the girls begin their confessions of sexual liaison with Bosambo amidst giggling, an indication that they did not mind going to bed with Bosambo. On his part, as the girls begin their confessions, Bosambo begins to fidget like a reprimanded child, in keeping with the film's representation of Africans as children.

The film also registers that beneath Bosambo's meekness, there is a valiant and dangerous underside. This is revealed in the battle scene where he confronts the Captain of the Old King's warriors shortly after the slave raid and in the scene where

he tries to teach his son the survival principles of his society. In this latter scene, a war song meant to portray him as a warmonger is introduced:

On, on into battle
 Make the wardrums rattle
 Mow them down like cattle
 On and on, on into battle, stamp them into dust...
 Charge, kill, shoot, smash, slash...fight and slay !

The incorporation of this violence-laden war song seems to be the film's own way of explaining the root causes of violent activities like slave raids and inter-ethnic warfares in precolonial African societies. The film seems to suggest that the methods of instruction in precolonial Africa were responsible for inter-ethnic wars. Since one of the film's major themes is that of peace, peace in terms of total submission to British colonial authority, the film tends to blame this mode of instruction for lack of peace in colonial society. I have earlier stated that Mofalaba represents one of the contending levels of power and authority in this text by virtue of the fact that he symbolises traditional African authority. However, while Sanders, his contending opposite symbol of authority is depicted as a fair and forthright ruler, the Mofalaba character is portrayed as a despot. This manner of representation is however not unique to Mofalaba. It is consistent with the conventional pattern of representing traditional African rulers in colonialist African cinema. The King Mofalaba character is thus a reproduction of similar character types such as Twala in *King Solomon's Mines*, Magole in *Men of Two Worlds*, Simba in *Simba* etc. The traditional institution of authority is so derogatorily portrayed in *Sanders of the River* that no one is left in doubt of the necessity of British imperial presence.

The use of propaganda clips in this film is also part of the overall strategy of discrediting the ruling capacities of traditional African rulers while celebrating British imperial presence. What is celebrated in this instance is the efficacy of indirect rule as the propaganda clip shows:

AFRICA

Tens of millions of natives under British rule, each tribe with its own chieftain, governed and protected by a handful of whitemen whose everyday work is an unsung saga of courage and efficiency. One of them was Commissioner Sanders.

With the penchant in colonialist films for spinning globes and maps, the propaganda clip in the opening sequence of the film is superimposed upon a fluttering British flag, the Union Jack, with the spinning globe signifying the all embracing nature of British colonial authority. But if indirect rule was efficient and cost effective, as the film seems to imply, it also encouraged divide-and-rule, bred favouritism, suspicion, rivalry, violence and the breach of peace, as the relationship between Mofalaba and Bosambo indicates - the very things colonial authority wanted to avoid.

In addition to his subordination to Sanders, Mofalaba is also portrayed to be childlike in nature. This is displayed most explicitly in the sequence in which he kills Ferguson. An instance of this childlikeness is shown during the brief verbal exchange between him and Ferguson. When Ferguson tells him that Sanders is alive and that Sanders will see to it that he, Mofalaba, is brought to justice if he kills him, Mofalaba sways like a child and retorts that Sanders is dead, as he had been assured by the gun-runner, Smith. Indeed, the relationship between Sanders and his subjects in this film, as well as the relationship between European characters and their African counterparts, is structured around European patronage and paternal attitude towards Africans. For instance, when Sanders has not been recalled from leave and Father O'Leary comes to report to Ferguson the violent situation in the district, Ferguson remarks that the arsonists who burnt O'Leary's church acted just like wild beasts. Responding, Father O'Leary, in a paternalistic tone, says they are not like wild beasts, rather, they are like misguided children and like a father, Ferguson must act quick like Sanders would have under similar circumstances. In another instance, Sanders while introducing Ferguson to the chiefs of his district, addresses them the way a headmaster would normally address his pupils or better still, the way a father would address his children. He

specifically tells them that they should obey Ferguson as if they were Ferguson's own children.

Another colonialist trope exploited by the film is the representation of Africans as sexually promiscuous people. This mode of representation is foregrounded through the examination of the traditional African marriage institution with specific reference to polygamy. Polygamy is treated in the film as an index of sexual promiscuity. For instance, when the slave girls attempt to submit themselves voluntarily in marriage to Bosambo en masse, Sanders first applies all sorts of subterfuges to dissuade them. When that does not seem to work, he puts his foot down and insists that Bosambo must practice the doctrine of one man one wife. The girls' readiness to marry Bosambo in spite of the fact that he has sexually exploited them, can be considered an indication of their sexual permissiveness. Furthermore, the choice of erotic African fertility dances featuring bare-breasted girls, is also informed by this underlying colonialist convention. These dances, which are featured for a fairly lengthy time during the Bosambo/Lilongo marriage sequence, and also during the victory dance sequence when captured female slaves are displayed, in the sequence following the departure of Sanders on leave, do not only represent Africans as sexually permissive people but also as primitive and barbaric.

In the Bosambo/Lilongo marriage sequence for instance, the shots switch from male dancers to bare-breasted dancing girls, to a set of women breast-feeding babies, to a group of children already perfecting the sexual rhythms of the dance. The shots therefore appear ordered to represent the awesome procreational machinery of traditional African societies. The intention in this instance, as well as in similar ones already cited, is to portray the totality of African social experience as primitive and barbaric. More broadly, dances are utilised in the marriage sequence both to create an erotic atmosphere as well as to present African cultural practices to Western spectators as part of the film's package.

Although the film sets out to celebrate indirect rule in Anglophone Africa, it also paradoxically exposes the fragility of the whole practice. As Richards and Aldgate observe:

there is an implicit subtext in the apparent fragility of British rule, given that it collapses the moment Sanders leaves the scene. One of the great paradoxes of British imperial history was the simultaneous dominance of twin emotions, confidence and fear - confidence in the rightness of British presence in far-off lands and fear that British rule would be violently overthrown (Richards and Aldgate: 18).

The news of the death of Sanders appropriately demonstrates the fragility that Richards and Aldgate refer to. The commotion which the news of his death brings to the carefully painted picture of a district that is as peaceful as an Edenic paradise also symbolises the underlying fragility of British colonial rule as represented in *Sanders of the Rivers*. For instance, once the news of his death is relayed through the district in drum messages, there is a sequence of shots representing the rapid slippage of Africans into savagery. This social degeneration or slippage into barbarism is shown in the form of a resumption and celebration of slave raids, a man rapidly climbing a tall coconut tree bare-handedly like a bat, and of animals lumbering in and out of water as if in joyful celebration of the absence of the law from the river. Though the whole sequence is structured to signify a slippage into the old regime of jungle justice, it has inadvertently ended up portraying the fragility of British colonial rule through the exploitation of the potentiality for such relapse.

The social degeneration of Africans into a state of barbarism in the absence of Sanders is captured in two contrastive montages. Richard Dyer explains the contrastive power of these two montages as follows:

throughout the film Africa is represented as a land of at best childish incompetence and at worst dangerous, violent ferment. The message of the film is that it is only the presence of white men that brings any law and order to the continent. The most concise and vivid illustration of this are two montage sequences, one occurring when Sanders has left the area (to go to Britain to get married) and the other on his return. The first showing Africa reverting to chaos - the drums of the 'bad' tribes sending messages that Sanders is dead, 'there is no law any more' are cut with shots of animal wildlife, which then cut to dissolving shots of war dances and warriors marching, followed by a series of dissolves of shots of vultures, ending with more shots of drumming and marching. The sequence dramatically shows the absence of the good white ruler heralding a reversion to a state of nature which, in Africa, is also a state of chaos and threatening violence (Dyer, 1986: 95).

The second sequence reverses the above order. Whereas the animals of the first sequence are for the most part dangerous ones like crocodiles and lions, those of the second sequence are the more harmless ones like birds and wildebeests; where earlier they were crowding together or moving in for the kill, here they are scattering as the law returns to the land (Dyer: 95-96).

With regard to the question of spectatorial textual positioning, I personally find it difficult to identify with the Africa and African characters represented in *Sanders of the River*, possibly because of my awareness of the colonialist nature of the text. Richards and Aldgate state that in 1957 when *Sanders* was shown for the first time on television, by ATV, as part of the season of Korda classics, *The Times* reported that the Nigerian High Commissioner to the UK, T. M. Mbu, protested to the television company about the showing, saying that it was "damaging to Nigeria and brought disgrace and disrepute to Nigerians" because the film is set in colonial Nigeria. They further add that the *Guardian* carried the same story, with an additional note from its Lagos correspondent observing that the film was very "popular" in Nigeria and had been showing to packed houses at three Lagos cinemas during that very week (Richards and Aldgate: 26). What I find quite disingenuous in Richards and Aldgate's assertion is the fact that the said correspondent did not mention the name of the cinemas where the film was very "popular" nor do they characterise the nature of Nigerian cinemagoers who found it "popular". What I do know is that beside T. M. Mbu, Nnamdi Azikiwe, an important journalist/nationalist of the period who later became the first indigenous president of the country condemned the film like most Nigerians (Azikiwe, 1968: 154-155).

In conclusion, though *Sanders of the River* is not the first film to institute the conventions of colonialist African cinema, that tradition having been initiated by the Tarzan jungle series of films, there is no doubt that it stands out today as a classic example of the sub-genre of films which it inaugurated, the colonial burden films. These films propagated the necessity for colonial rule. However, their attempts to

reflect the contradictions of colonial societies often negate this message, thereby exposing the fragility of the whole project. This becomes both a lamentation and an acknowledgement of the burden of colonial rule. Evidence of this textual pattern can be glimpsed from *Sanders of the River*, *Men of Two Worlds*, *Mister Johnson* etc, where attempts to portray the power play of colonial societies and the rationalisation of colonialism result in the exposure of the fragility of the whole system.

5.6. Colonialist Autobiographical Films.

Colonialist African autobiographical films are based on the memoirs and autobiographies of Europeans who have lived, worked or travelled through the continent. Because of this attribute of personal first-hand knowledge of the continent, most of the films as well as the literature from which they are adapted, seem to contain elements of nostalgia. These films are however the most problematic of all colonialist films because of the underlying element of remembrance. Most of them genuinely admire many aspects of African society, such as respect for old age and elderly persons, the care and protections of the extended family systems, African hospitality, etc., but there is also the prevalence of ethnocentric and paternalistic views which make one wonder sometimes if the emotions expressed about certain aspects of African life-style are indeed genuine. The films which contain these textual qualities include, *Out of Africa* (Sydney Pollack, 1985), *Gorillas in the Mist: The Story of Dian Fossey* (Michael Apted, 1988) and *Chocolat* (Claire Denis, 1988). In this present work, I shall be focusing only on *Chocolat*.

5.6.1. *Chocolat*.

Chocolat is an autobiographical film which recalls Claire Denis's childhood days in the French Cameroon of the 1950s. The film is unique in many ways. First, it is the first film set in Africa by a female European director. Second, it is Denis's debut as a film director. Before this, she had been assistant director to both Wim Wenders and Jim Jarmusch and according to Margaret Walters, her work "avoids their stylised whimsy in favour of a transparent, and very personal, simplicity" (Walters, 1989: 47).

The film's narrative is a conjunction of two historical narratives, one dealing with the colonial era, the other, with the post-colonial era in Cameroon. Though the narrative begins in present day Cameroon, this post-colonial narrative merely serves as a mirror for re-assessing events of the colonial period. For instance, many of the cinematic iconographies signalled in the colonial narrative in the form of the introduction of air transport and construction of air fields, are recalled in the post-colonial narrative, especially in the departure sequence with all its modern airport paraphernalia. Though the film switches codes between the present and the past through memory recall, and though it uses the colonial narrative to comment on developmental progress in post-colonial Cameroon, there is a deliberate obliqueness and ambiguity as to whether the narrative strategy is meant to serve as some sort of sanction of the colonial project.

This ambiguity arises from the fact that even though the film uses most of the recognisable colonialist tropes of representation like emblematic postcard framing of the landscape and racist rhetorics, they are deliberately made oblique through the element of parody. For instance, when Delpich (Jacques Denis) gives food to his African mistress, Thérèse (Edwige Nto Ngon a Zock), he says: "Here's your grub sweetie", as if she were some sort of animal. This same phrase is later parodied by Protée (Isaac de Bankole) when he gives edible insects to the young France (Cecile Ducas) during the airfield construction sequence. Linda Hutcheon defines parody as follows:

parody...in its ironic "trans-contextualization" and inversion, is repetition with difference. A critical distance is implied between the backgrounded text being parodied and the incorporating work, a distance usually signalled by irony. But this irony can be playful as well as destructive. The pleasure of parody's irony comes not from humour in particular but from the degree of engagement of the reader in the intertextual "bouncing" between complicity and distance (Hutcheon, 1985: 34-36).

Most of the ambiguity in *Chocolat* comes from this continuous bouncing between complicity and distance in the textual construction of colonialist African discourse and in the representation of Africans. The resort to memory recall through France's subjective flashback, is the main strategy used to avoid the complicity of colonialist

rhetoric. But memory recall as a narrative strategy is tied up with nostalgia, and since the film is made by a European director, nostalgia tends to assume the quality of colonialist complicity.

Chocolat is about the visit of France (Mireille Perrier) to post-colonial Cameroon in search of her father's colonial outpost where she spent her childhood. The film begins with a freeze-frame of a shot of a beach which looks very much like a desert but for the accompanying wave-sound in the soundtrack. As the shot unfreezes, it becomes clear, with the rising and falling of the waves, that scene is set at a beach. At first, the beach looks deserted as the opening credits appear. However, as the shot lingers awhile, two figures emerge from the waves, a man and a little boy. They play about for a while, and then, splash water on each other and run off towards screen left. This is followed by a gradual pan to screen right to reveal a white woman sitting and contemplating the beach.

From her sitting position and contemplative mood, it looks as if she wants to go for a swim since she is wearing a swimming suit. However, instead of going for the swim, something in her seems to resist the water. A cut from her to a close up of the upper body of the black boy lying on the beach reveals the water to be of chocolate-colour, full of dirt. This shot is followed by another close up of an adult black hand which is then followed by a shot of the boy and the man. They later turn out to be the African-American, Mungo Park (Emmet Judson Williamson), and his son. A cut back to France shows her amused by Mungo Park and his son. Shortly afterwards, her countenance changes when through her point-of-view shot, we note that the water is full of dirt. She gets up from her sitting position, dresses, and leaves the beach because of the impurity of the water.

The association of the African natural surrounding with threatening impurities is not something unique to *Chocolat*. It is one of the conventions of colonialist African cinematic representation of the African environment. We encounter it in *The African Queen*, in the form of the deceptive leisurely flow of the river with its cavernous rapids, leech-infested waters and wasp-like insects; in *Men of Two Worlds*, the lush

green vegetation, which is expressionistically lit to give it the uncontaminated purity of an Edenic garden, is later revealed to be infested by tsetseflies, bearer of lassa-fever and sleeping-sickness diseases; in *King Solomon's Mines*, the vegetation is represented as a cover for the threatening and perceivable presence of natives. In *Chocolat* too, rotting dead leaves of the tropical forest region of Cameroon, are said to possess a benumbing effect on Europeans.

Nikki Stiller, in her review of the film, has equally noted the film's parodic contrast of the attitudes of Africans and Europeans to nature and the surrounding. She observes that

the Western attitude toward nature in this film appears as skewed, morbid, denatured. The American black and his chocolate son, in the opening scene, let the waves caress them. Never do the whites take pleasure in water this way. They contrive to shower indoors, thus depriving themselves of the best "sale de bain du monde", while the blacks are made to bathe in the open. The detained pilot fears the seasonal rain will ruin his runway. The film ends with a jubilant downpour. To the Africans it is part of life, perhaps a blessing. To the European intent on going elsewhere, the rain is merely an inconvenience (Stiller, 1990: 52).

What Stiller says of European attitude to nature in *Chocolat*, is true; what she fails to add however is that the representation of this Western attitude, is part of the strategy of parody in the text. The film however complies with colonialist filmic practice in several respects. For instance, the representation of the African landscape follows the postcard framing pattern noticeable in other films. Emphasis is placed on revealing the geographic otherness of the landscape. However, there is a highly contrastive element with respect to this film. Before and after the flashback, a combination of pans and fast tracks are employed to show the tropical vegetation and architecture of southern Cameroon. In the flashback sequences, similar shot compositions are employed, this time, to represent the sparse vegetation of the north, together with its round huts with thatch roofs, and rectangular mud houses with flat mud-roofed tops. The comparative schema is employed here to show Western spectators, differences in geographic outlook and architecture between northern and southern Cameroon.

The journey sequences both before, during and after the flashback are particularly significant for their contrastive qualities. Beside vehicular comparison, old

modelled cars and trucks for the colonial era and modern Peugeot cars and buses for the post-colonial era, the differences in road make up is also graphically registered. The post-colonial road is a modern asphalt tarred road while the colonial one is just an earth road. As noted earlier, the film is ambiguous with regards to whether the narrative strategy of historical recollection through filmic parallelism and contrast, is necessarily a manner of nostalgic sanction of the colonial project. Besides the noted colonialist influence in the representation of the landscape, the film also adheres to colonialist African cinematic conventions in the area of characterisation. Most of the characters fall into the types already firmly established in colonialist African cinema: there is the liberal good natured, workaholic colonial administrator in the person of Marc Dalens (François Cluzet); the neglected colonial house wife in the person of Aimée (Giulia Boschi); the colonial white underdog in the persons of Delpich and Luc (Jean-Claude Adelin) and of course, the black male servant in the person of Protée. All of these characters have correspondences in other colonialist African films.

Marc Dalens's type, for instance, can be found in Rudbeck in *Mister Johnson* and Sanders in *Sanders of the River*. These characters are often typed as workaholics whose singlemindedness and dedication to duty is contrasted as well as equated with dereliction of duty at the marital front. The call of duty delays the marriage of Sanders while the workaholism of Rudbeck and Dalens leads to neglect of their wives. There are implied references to Johnson's sexual relations with Mrs Rudbeck. In *Chocolat*, Claire Denis's attempt to circumvent stereotypes of the black male servant somehow end up foregrounding them even though she does try to affirm the integrity of the character by making him refuse the advances of Aimée. This integrity is however devalued through the incorporation of a sadistic underside to the character. Two of the most shocking moments in the film are devoted to the depiction of Protée's sadistic underside.

One of them takes place on the journey to Marc's station during the flashback. The event is recorded when the family stops for a lunchbreak. Protée's sadism is represented in this instance through comparison of parallel relations between him and

Marc on the one hand, and between him and the young France on the other. When the truck stops, intimacy between Marc and Protée is represented through an establishing shot of both of them urinating side by side. What later transpires between Protée and the little girl seems to be a betrayal of trust. After Marc has gone back to the front of the vehicle, Protée collects France's bread and sticks ants with it taken from where they have just urinated, to make a sandwich for France. To underline the sadistic nature of the situation, Protée is made to go through the whole exercise in a mute manner. This pattern of behaviour is re-established toward the end of the film when he takes vengeance on France by making her hold the hot exhaust of the generator.

The characterisation of the white underdog is also typical of colonialist African cinema conventions. Two of the most perverse white characters in this film, Delpich and Luc, are white underdogs. Delpich is a coffee planter who has gone native by having a local woman as a mistress, while Luc the ex-seminarian in his relationship with the natives seems bound for such an end. These characters have correspondences with similar ones like Farini and Smith in *Sanders of the River* and Gollup in *Mister Johnson*. Colonialist African films often emphasise the point that it is Europeans of lower class backgrounds who are racist in outlook, a view that *Chocolat* seems to subscribe to. Luc, who is considered the most racist of all the European characters in the film, is a white underdog. According to Marie Craven, Luc is the most depraved as well as the most hypocritical of all the European characters:

of all the European characters, the ugliest and most perverse is Luc Sagalen (Jean-Claude Adelin) At first he appears as a saintly ascetic one who has eschewed a culturally superior position, identifying himself with African worker. Yet his humility contains a sneer. He ostentatiously enacts the role of an outsider, a position that cannot exist, that can be adopted only with hypocrisy. In his misanthropy, political conviction becomes a weapon that maintains his sense of superiority against both Africans and Europeans alike (Craven, 1990: 36).

The Luc character is therefore a typical white parasite who refuses to work but fully exploits the canopy provided by the colonial administrative structure. He is a social leech and a political pretender. His ascetic airs are only a smokescreen for his failure to build up a career of his own. Though the film is critical of the Luc character, its

criticism is offered within the colonialist convention of representing working class Europeans as degenerate whites.

Claire Denis's characterisation of European women in *Chocolat* reveals most aptly the lot of European women in colonial societies. They were essentially appendages to their husbands. Their only social engagement involve playing host to visiting colonial bureaucrats just as Aimée does in the film. This role apart, most of the time, they were lonely as their busy husbands had little time for them. The only company they had was the black male servants who normally filled the husband's role in his absence, hence the temptation for infidelity.

Characterisation apart, the film can be read as an allegory on Franco-African relationship. This is borne out of the fact that the central character of the film is called France. The relationship between France and Protée is in many respects typical of Franco-African relationship. Though Protée is bigger and older than France, just as Africa is older and bigger than France, she bosses him around just as France today dominates parts of Africa formerly under her colonial authority. She also spoonfeeds Protée like a beggar from her bowl in a manner symbolic of the dependence of most Francophone African countries on French aid. Read along these lines, adult France's return to post-colonial Cameroon and her memory recalls can be considered as the allegorical return of France to the country, to claim credit for whatever infrastructural development or modernisation there is in her erstwhile colony, as product of France's colonial beneficence. In fact, through adult France's flashback, the representation of modern infrastructural development in post-colonial Cameroon such as roads and airports, is linked to the road construction and the building of airfield, in French colonial Cameroon, as product of colonial heritage. At bottom line, the film seems to suggest that without French colonialism, Cameroon would not have developed its modern infrastructures. This is also the underlining argument in the whole genre.

Such an argument would be historically inaccurate because both before and after the slave trade, that is prior to colonialism, there was a flourishing trade between Europe and Africa, and documented evidence of autonomous efforts towards

modernisation on the continent. For instance, according to Chinweizu, as early as the 1490s, the reigning monarch of the Congo (Zaire), the Mani-Kongo of the Bakongo, Nzinga a Mvende, son of Nzinga a Nkuwu, decided voluntarily to embrace christianity and Europeanise his kingdom, in his quest for modernisation. Upon his baptism, he dropped his African names and titles and became Dom Afonso I, King of the Congo and Lord of the Ambundos. He learned to read and write Portuguese, Europeanised his court in both etiquette and dress, and sent some of his sons, relatives and noble youths to study in Portugal and Rome. One of them, Dom Henrique, served as Bishop of Utica, a city on the Mediterranean coast of what is today Tunisia. He returned in 1521, after an absence of thirteen years, to serve as Bishop of Bukongo. All through the long reign of Afonso I (1506-1543), there were ambassadorial exchanges between the kingdom, Portugal and Rome. Afonso desperately wanted aid for autonomous development and set about building schools and cathedrals in his kingdom but his Portuguese trading partners wanted slaves. He wrote to the king of Portugal protesting this development to no avail. In the end, the Portuguese waged war against the kingdom and brought it under its authority, for resisting slave trade within its boundaries, and in their quest for slaves, gold, copper, etc (Chinweizu, 1978: 27-30).

The experience of Afonso I and his successors are not unique in Africa. The Oba of Benin, Chief Nana of Itsekiri, King Pepple of Bonny, etc., all pre-colonial rulers in present day Nigeria, also sent their wards to study in Europe and exchanged ambassadors with European countries, in their quest for autonomous development. They were all later overthrown by the British for denying them access to inland trade. As a result of the existence of alternative paradigms of quests for autonomous development and modernisation prior to colonialism, the rhetorics of colonial beneficence projected in the colonialist genre can, at best, be explained as part of the textual rationalisation of colonial rule.

In sum, *Chocolat* is a very problematic film with regards to the construction of colonialist African discourse and the representation of Africans. Though the film uses most of the acknowledged conventions of colonialist African cinema, the subjection of

these conventions to parodic treatment makes it difficult to ascertain the extent to which nostalgia is informed by the sanction of the colonial project. The elaborate use of Abdullah Ibrahim's music further exacerbates the level of ambivalence in the film since most colonialist films, use music as an element for marking the social segregation of colonial societies. The use of Abdullah Ibrahim's music seems genuinely borne out of love for African rhythms and indeed, one of the most memorable moments in the film is that which has two small boys running after a public advertising bus playing indigenous music. The scene carries rather genuine memories of small towns' mode of advertising in Africa, one which is still widely practised. Unlike in *Mister Johnson* where European music is used as one of the elements for acknowledging the social segregation of colonial space, thereby reinforcing the colonialist structure of the film, the music score of *Chocolat* is mostly African and is used both to open up spaces for native counter-discourse as well as create an African atmosphere for the film.

5.7. Decolonisation Conflict Films.

Most of the films that fall under the category of decolonisation conflict films are films that deal with native revolts against colonial authority toward the end of British colonial rule in Africa. The emphasis in these films is on the representation of the barbarity of the coercive methods applied by leaders of the revolts in their struggle against colonial rule. The mass revolts are not represented as independence struggle movements; rather, they are portrayed as violent uprisings championed by a few misguided elements who recruit people through coercion and threats of violence. However, with the benefit of hindsight, these films can now be read as liberation struggles films even though they were originally conceived as decolonisation conflict films. As a result of the nature of the subject matter treated in these films, most of them seem to be set in regions where European settlement resulted in mass appropriation of lands and the dispossession of the natives. The two films that stand out in this regard, are *Simba* and *The Kitchen Toto*, both set in colonial Kenya. In this

study, I shall be focusing on *Simba*, the first film to deal with the issue of native revolt against colonialism in Africa.

5.7.1. *Simba*.

Simba (Brian Desmond Hurst, 1955) was shot on location in Kenya toward the end of the Mau Mau uprising. The film is supposed to be about the Mau Mau revolt but its narrative is structured in such a way that issues which are central to the revolt, like the appropriation of native lands, are never referred to; instead, emphasis is placed on ritual practices like the process of oath taking which the film represents as barbaric. In addition, Africans are represented as simple-minded people who are coerced into the revolt through violent means. The reason for the revolt itself is relegated to the background thereby making it look like a mindless uprising thus discrediting the Mau Mau movement as a mass anti-colonial revolt. In my analysis of the film therefore, I will be placing the Mau Mau revolt in historical context so that textual gaps created by the backgrounding of the central issue of the revolt, are brought into focus.

The origin of the Mau Mau can be traced to the British colonial settler policy in then East Africa Protectorate, later to be called Kenya, shortly after the annexation of the region in June 1895. The relatively temperate climate and good agricultural land around the Rift Valley region and the Highlands attracted European settlements. But the impetus for this rapid settlement of the region by Europeans and Asians came with the opening up of the inland area by the East African Railway that was then being built from Mombasa to Uganda by the British colonial administration. This construction work brought in large numbers of Asians as construction workers as the war for the "pacification" of the region continued. With the successful suppression of the Nandis and the Kikuyus who led the opposition to British colonial settlement, large numbers of European settlers, mostly British, poured into the region. To realise the dream of a settler colony, the policy of land appropriation was vigorously pursued.

Vast agricultural lands around the Rift Valley region and the Highlands, the most fertile land in Kenya, the rest of the country being mostly semi desert region,

were appropriated, thereby creating a large population of landless Africans. Not that there was unanimity over the policy in Britain. There were noted disagreements between the Foreign Office, the Treasury and the Colonial Office. However, the relative powerlessness of the Colonial Office in the face of the Foreign Office's policy of encouragement of European immigrants for the purpose of rapid development of the Protectorate, and the Treasury's decision to sell lands around railway lines in order to recoup expenditure for the rail project, led to the triumph of the policy of land appropriation. Africans who were ejected from these lands were either confined to area called Forest Native Reserves, very much like the Anglo-American policy against native Americans, created by the colonial government, or they became squatters in their ancestral lands (Sorrenson, 1968: 31-43). Furendi has also noted the impact of this policy on the Kikuyu, who incidentally are the largest ethnic group in Kenya, and the ethnic group that spearheaded the Mau Mau revolt:

of all the peoples of Kenya, it was the Kikuyu whose ways of life were most disrupted by colonial rule. Many of them were disposed of their land and were forced to work for European enterprises at a relatively early stage of the colonial era. But the impact of colonialism on the Kikuyu was more comprehensive than the simple loss of land. Central Province, the area where the Kikuyu lived, was swiftly drawn into the capitalist market and underwent major social transformation (Furendi, 1989: 5).

In addition to this appropriation of land and force labour, there was also the institution of apartheid and the restriction of the free movement of Africans. According to J.M. Karuiki, a key figure in the Mau Mau movement, detained alongside other leaders by the colonial government between 1953 and 1960, Africans during the colonial era, suffered all sorts of social degradation at the hands of European settlers:

many Europeans refused to talk to educated Africans in any language but their deplorably bad Swahili; old men were addressed as boys and monkeys; Africans with land near Europeans were not allowed to plant coffee; there was a wholesale disregard for human dignity and little respect for any one with a black skin (Kariuki, 1963: 49).

As we shall later observe with regards to *Simba* the above derogatory language is what is used by Europeans when referring to Africans. In fact, there is a sense in which *Simba* legitimises the revolt through adherence to this manner of address even though

the film represents the mass revolt as a mindless uprising. The revolt itself was a product of the Squatter Movement, which evolved as a result of the land appropriation policy. The movement grew out of a loose association of squatters living on European farms as tenants, farmhands and house servants. Such associations as the Young Kikuyu Association (YKA) and the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) started in the 1920s later grew into nationwide nationalist movement, the Kenya African Union (KAU). The Oath of Unity, which forms the central focus in *Simba*, was instituted by KAU to unite all the ethnic groups in Kenya into a strong nationalist movement. The movement itself was not called the Mau Mau. This was a derogatory term invented by the propaganda machine of the colonial government in order to discredit the movement. Kariuki explains its origins as follows:

this is the real origin of the name 'Mau Mau'. Kikuyu children when playing and talking often make puns and anagrams with common words. When I was a child I would say to other children 'Ithi, Ithi', instead of 'Thii, Thii', (meaning 'Go, Go'); and 'Mau Mau', instead of 'Uma Uma'. One evening, people went to a house in Naivasha area where the oath was to be administered ... That evening, the guard was given the instruction that, if he heard footsteps and suspected it was the police or an enemy, he should shout the anagram 'Mau Mau' so that those in the house could escape (Kariuki: 50-51).

According to him, that evening, the police did arrive on a tip off and the man on guard shouted the agreed anagram "Mau Mau". When the police arrived they found no one but the paraphernalia of oath taking. They then reported back to Police Headquarters that they heard the words "Mau Mau" but found nobody in the scene. After this incident, a certain loyalist Church leader referred to as Parmenas reportedly popularised the term as part of the strategy of pouring scorn on the movement (Kariuki, *ibid.*). The nationalist movement was therefore tagged "Mau Mau" in order to qualify it as a childish movement. This manner of representation is also the pattern followed in the film *Simba*.

The film examines the Mau Mau revolt through the personal experiences of two European families, the Howards and the Crawfords. The central character Alan (Dirk Bogarde) arrives in Kenya to find that his brother David has just been murdered

by the Mau Mau who have left their mark "SIMBA" (Swahili word for lion) scribbled in blood on the doorpost. He is therefore faced with two options, return to England immediately or stay on and defend the family property. He chooses the latter option even though he is by this time full of bitterness toward Africans. His suspicion that every African belongs to the Mau Mau movement, puts a lot of strain on his relationship with Mary (Virginia McKenna), his white Kenyan girlfriend who feels it is possible for both blacks and whites to live together peacefully without racial hatred. Part of the film's project includes seeing the growth of the Bogarde character from the position of intolerance to one of understanding, but that growth is achieved only at the expense of black sacrifice in form of the death of Dr Karanja toward the end of the film.

The film begins with a shot of a singing black man riding a bicycle along a lonely stretch of road. His song is soon interrupted by a cry for help from a white man fatally injured from an attack. The black man dismounts from his bicycle quietly, examines the scene to make sure that nobody is looking, brings out his machete and hacks the man to death. This opening sequence with its mindless killing is the film's way of representing the Mau Mau uprising. We are not told why the black man kills the white man. As the film progresses, this pattern is repeated without explanation, thereby giving the impression that the Mau Mau was a mindless murderous uprising. During the drive from the airport to the farm, this pattern of representation is further reinforced through portrayal of the landscape at the centre of disputation as a semi desert region. The representation of the landscape as a wasteland where Europeans are managing to eke out a living makes them appear victims of unwarranted African violence. Through this manner of representation, the film solicits empathy to the cause of injustice. The African who was victim of British colonial land appropriation policy becomes the villain in a mindless murderous uprising. According to a reviewer in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* of March 1955, the film merely sets out to glamourise violence through exploitation of its dramatic potentials:

simply to exploit the dramatic potentials of violence and mistrust in the present situation in Kenya is not enough; and *Simba*, though its intentions may be serious, achieves little more than this. Only in its admission of intolerance on the part of some British settlers does it ever get beyond the immediate obvious aspects of the situation. That is to say, it fails to acknowledge that Mau Mau represents something ... in the film ... one has the feeling that tension have grown up in a vacuum. The native people never express any cause of grievance against the whites, the implication being that through fear, ignorance and superstition, they have been influenced by a band of terrorists into believing they are bad (*Monthly Film Bulletin* Vol.22 No.254, March, 1955).

In addition, many of the specular and emotional gratifications that *Simba* have to offer were initiated and realised at the expense of what were tragic moments for Africans. The film does not only reduce the Mau Mau to a farcical ritual, it also employs some of the foulest colonialist form of verbal address. Its quasi-realistic project is built around principally derogatory form of address in which African men are referred to as "boys" and "monkeys" and their behaviour termed "childish". The only exceptions in this practice are Mary (Virginia McKenna) and Dr Hughes (Joseph Tomelty) - and both are considerably minority opinions. As earlier stated, if this form of address served any purpose in the film beside reinforcing the colonialist structures of the text, then, it is to legitimise in an inadvertent manner, the Mau Mau uprising.

With respect to the representation of the African landscape, the film adopts the general conventions of colonialist African cinema. There are aerial photographs of the landscape with spectacular scenes of fleeing buffaloes, open beaches, forests and savannah grassland. As in the earlier films, the photographic strategy is aimed at exploiting the geographic otherness of the landscape and its vast games reserves, for the specular pleasures of Western spectators. The incorporation of market scenes, with their vast arrays of foodstuffs, animals and haggling market women, is also part of the ethnographic display of the racial and cultural otherness of the people. The setting of the interrogation scene next to the market serves to further the overall strategy of ethnographic display of peoples and cultures of Kenya.

The interior scenes of European bungalows with their teams of grinning but violence-prone house servants further reinvoke images of grinning but cunningly scheming blacks popularised by early Hollywood's representation of African-

Americans, reminding us, in accordance with the symbolic meaning in the tradition of its construction, that there is treachery lurking somewhere beneath the grinning face. The film seems to be saying that the Kenyan house servants might be grinning but they could also be spies or Mau Mau recruits.

Richard Dyer, in his analysis of the film, has observed that

Simba is founded on the 'Manicheism delirium' identified by Frantz Fanon as characteristic of colonialist sensibility ... The film is organised around a rigid binarism, with white standing for modernity, reason, order, stability, and black standing for backwardness, irrationality, chaos and violence (Dyer, 1988: 49).

This contrastive mode of representation reaches its climax in the parallel editing of the two meeting sequences - the African meeting called for the initiation of Mau Mau recruits and the European meeting called for vigilante plans in the settler community. Dyer's analysis of both sequences details how the underlying Manicheistic thought is realised cinematically:

the white meeting takes place in early evening, in a fully lit room; characters that speak are shot with standard high key lighting so that they are fully visible; everyone sits in rows and although there is disagreement, some of it hot-tempered and emotional it is expressed in grammatical discourse in a language the British viewer can understand ... The black meeting, on the other hand, takes place at the dead of night, out of doors, with all characters in shadows; even the Mau Mau leader is lit with sub-expressionist lighting that dramatises and distorts his face; grouping is in form of broken, uneven circle; what speech there is is ritualised, not reasoned and remains untranslated (Dyer: 49-50).

Even though one could argue that the lighting of the African meeting is determined by the surreptitious and clandestine nature of the uprising, it is no reason for denial of speech and the reasoned persuasion of the Mau Mau recruits. Furthermore, by choosing to highlight the oath-taking ritual ceremony instead of the central issue of land appropriation, the mass uprising is downgraded into a barbaric orgy of drunken stupor and ritual sacrifice. The overall impression one gets from the film is the official British colonialist view that the Mau Mau is a terrorist organisation. In keeping with this line of thought, the film ends on a note of optimism as it looks into the future with the death of Simba (Orlando Martins) and a shot of an African child.

In conclusion, *Simba* is a colonialist film that deals with the problems of British decolonisation in Africa. Though the film is based on the Mau Mau uprising, it refuses to highlight what was responsible for the revolt; instead, it directs its focus on a ritual ceremony which highlights the operational methods of Mau Mau. The methods are portrayed as coercive and barbaric in nature. By focusing only upon operational methods at the expense of land disputation and the practice of apartheid, the film solicits empathy for the white cause. It is only in displaying white intolerance through a derogatory form of address that the film touches on reasons of black discontent and revolt.

5.8. Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have traced the historical background of colonialist African cinema by tracing its roots to colonialist African discourse, in general, and colonialist African literature in particular. I have also argued that the ideas that informed the films, and the literary texts, are nineteenth century racial theories which constituted Africans as inferior beings. I have equally given a classification of the various types of films which constitute the cinematic practice as a genre, and a tabulation of its general modes of representation, with respect to the construction of African subjectivity and culture, in comparison to Europeans.

In my textual analysis, I have argued that, in general terms, most of the films structure their narratives by setting up a comparative schema which represent Africans as savages and bestial both in behaviour and in cultural practices, and as people who are impulsive and emotional in their responses to situations. They are also represented as people lacking individual initiative, incapable of acquiring knowledge and by extension initiating development projects, and as people always on the verge of slippage into barbarism once white authority is not present. It is in this regard that they differ considerably from colonial African instructional cinema. On the other hand, Europeans are represented as civilised, calculating and rational in their responses to situations. With respect to spatial articulation, I have argued that in most of these

films, space is defined by the presence of white lead characters. Africans remain in the background and are shot in mostly long shots, with spectatorial access to them, tied in most cases, to their movement into white space or when white characters move into theirs. Within this broad comparative schema however, the colonialist structures of the films are undermined by the incorporation of counter-narratives linked with gender and class politics, especially with respect to the representation of European subjectivity, where negative character attributes are projected upon members of the working class as in the case of Farini and Smith in *Sanders of the River*, Delpich and Luc in *Chocolat*, Sargy Gollup in *Mister Johnson*, etc., but also, with respect to Africans where such counter-narratives take the form of Africans' opposition to European imperial presence. These underlining counter-narratives within colonialist African cinema makes its discursive structures ambivalent and the application of pure binarist schema for its analysis simplistic.

CHAPTER SIX.

FILM PRODUCTION STRUCTURES AND SPONSORSHIP PATTERNS IN ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN COUNTRIES.

6.1. Introduction.

In this chapter, I shall be examining the nature of film production structures and sponsorship patterns in both English and French speaking African countries. The emphasis shall be on how colonial and post-colonial production structures and sponsorship policies of countries within the two linguistic blocks have affected film production output and quality. I have chosen to concentrate on English and French speaking African countries because, together, they account for more than two-third of film production in Africa. Besides this, two-third of African countries also belong to the two linguistic blocks and by examining how the production structures and sponsorship policies of these countries affect their output and quality, one should be able to gain a fair knowledge of the scope and quality of film production in Africa.

I shall start by examining the nature of film production in colonial and post-colonial Anglophone African countries, followed by those in Francophone Africa. Finally, there shall be a comparison of the effects of British and French colonial and post-colonial cultural policies on the scope and quality of current film production in the countries under consideration. The quality of films shall be measured by the general artistic quality of productions and their level of popularity and reception by African spectators, the immediate spectators for whom they are meant, and of course the larger world spectators who might have the opportunity to see them and pass general critical judgements, including awards won in both African and international film festivals. I am aware of the fact that a film may be of good artistic quality, may even win awards both locally and internationally, without being popular with African spectators. On the other hand, it is possible for a production to be of poor quality and yet be popular among spectators, as in the case with some films of the Yoruba folklore cinema productions. Such exceptional cases will be acknowledged, but special emphasis shall be placed on

those films which were popular and yet were also critically acclaimed, especially by African film critics and scholars.

6.2. Film Production Structures and Sponsorship Policies in Anglophone Africa.

6.2.1. Colonial Film Production Structures and Sponsorship Policies in Anglophone Africa.

Film production was introduced into most Anglophone African countries after the Second World War as part of the British colonial government's instructional cinema programme. The British colonial government's perception of the cinema as a useful aid to development and modernisation in what were then largely illiterate societies resulted in the establishment of the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) in 1939. Throughout the war years, the Unit concentrated its efforts on the production of propaganda films in aid of British war efforts. During this period, it also launched the "Raw Stock Scheme" under which it gave out 16 mm. cameras and raw film stock to British officials working in the colonies, especially information officers, to shoot newsworthy ongoing development projects and important ceremonies for the CFU. This scheme did not require the participants to have any specialised knowledge of the camera. They gained a working knowledge of the cine camera through experimentation and later became a source of news materials for the CFU. The film footage shot under the scheme was sent to the CFU's studio in London for processing, editing, and criticism by experts, who forwarded their opinions through correspondence to participants.

After the war, emphasis shifted to the production of instructional films in aid of colonial governments' development efforts. The CFU, which had hitherto been concentrated in London, was also decentralised, with sub-Units set up in most African countries. The first CFU in Africa was set up in Ghana in 1945. Subsequent CFUs were set up in Nigeria in 1946, Kenya and Uganda in 1947, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, and the Central African Federation, comprising Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland (Malawi), in 1948.

To facilitate the training of indigenous personnel in film production, a Mobile Film Training School was set up by the CFU. The training school for Africans was held in Accra, Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1948. Subsequent training schools were held in Jamaica for the West Indies in 1950 and Cyprus in 1951, for the Middle East and Asia. The last training school was held in London in 1955. The Accra Film Training School, which lasted for six months, was attended by three students each from Ghana and Nigeria. They were trained in both 16 mm. and 35 mm. equipment. Sam Aryetey and Adamu Halilu, who later became General Managers of Ghana Film Corporation and Nigerian Film Corporation respectively, were among the pioneer students at the Accra Film Training School. During the colonial era, most film productions undertaken by the Unit in each territory were government sponsored productions, and they formed part of their instructional cinema programmes.

The Gold Coast (Ghana) Film Unit was organised on a professional basis in 1949, following the completion of the first Film Training School held in Accra in 1948. The Film Unit was under the overall control of the Director of Information Services in the Gold Coast and its stated objective was the making of films in Africa for Africans by Africans. Despite this stated objective, most of its films were directed by Sean Graham, a former student of John Grierson. The Ghanaians trained at the Accra Film Training School had to wait until Independence before they tried their hands at directing. They functioned during the colonial period mainly as actors and technical assistants to Graham. The Unit had facilities for recording, post-synchronisation, and editing. The laboratory work still had to be undertaken in London. The Unit had two sections, one of which produced scripted dialogue films, and the other, newsreel materials. The former section worked with amateur local casts and shot most of its films on location. It had sound track and other equipment. The films it produced were mainly short story films meant to interest Africans in improving their standards of living such as *Kofi the Good Farmer*, about cocoa growing, and didactic feature shorts such as: *Amenu's Child* (1950), which deals with the consequences of neglecting modern health care in favour of

traditional medicine; *Jaguar High Life*, which deals with the theme of acculturation; *The Boy Kumasenu* (1952), which deals with city life; *Freedom for Ghana*, a documentary on Ghana's independence struggles. The Gold Coast Film Unit became independent in 1950, seven years before Ghana became independent. Two films of the Unit's productions, *Amenu's Child* and *The Boy Kumasenu*, attracted favourable attention at international film festivals and were publicly acclaimed. *Amenu's Child* was shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival and won an award at the Venice Film Festival in 1950. *The Boy Kumasenu*, the first full length feature to be made in West Africa, was shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1952 and was shortlisted for the British Film Academy. The film was widely distributed in Ghana and the United Kingdom. In 1957, Graham, the artistic director of the Unit left Ghana after its independence, and the President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, nationalised both film distribution and production in the country. (Central Office of Information (COI) Bulletin No. R. 3161, October, 1955: 6; Diawara, 1992: 5-6).

The Federal Film Unit (FFU) of Nigeria, centred around Lagos, also grew out of the CFU. The Unit was set up in October 1946 although the government of Nigeria's legislation which legalised it as a Division of the Federal Ministry of Information was not enacted until 1947. Even before the Unit was set up in Nigeria, the Film Exhibition Section of the Federal Ministry of Information had already formed the nucleus of what was to become the FFU as far back as 1945. Originally, the Film Unit was a Public Relations Section of the Marketing and Publicity Department of the Federal Government of Nigeria. Its functions then were to explore the country's resources and enhance the nation's economic growth. The FFU was established with N.F. Spurr as Film Officer and it had a nucleus Nigerian staff made up of A.A. Fajemisin, J.A. Otigba and Malam Yakubu Auna, all were trained at the Film Training School in Accra, Ghana. In its early days, most of the films shown by the FFU were supplied by the CFU in London. Later, the FFU began to produce its own documentaries. Some of the films produced during the colonial period are: *Empire Day Celebrations in Nigeria* (1948), *Smallpox* (1950),

Leprosy (1950) *Port Harcourt Municipal Council Elections* (1950), *Queen Elizabeth II's Visit to Nigeria* (1956), etc.

In addition to locally produced films, newsreels were also provided by a commercial film distributor who imported two copies of British Movietone and one of Gaumont British by air every week. Pathe (British) News was also distributed in the country. These films were shown in Lagos and in towns and villages across Nigeria by the Mobile Film Units. Shortly after the establishment of the FFU, the old three principal regions in Nigeria, Western Region, Eastern Region, and Northern Region, later set up their own regional Film Units. They received supply of films and Mobile Cinema Vans from the parent body, the Federal Ministry of Information, through the FFU. The political structure of Nigeria has since changed with the creation of the Midwestern Region in 1963. At present, Nigeria is made up of thirty states, most of which have their own Film Units (Mgbejume, 1989: 43; Opubor and Nwuneli, 1979: 2-3).

In East Africa, Film Units were established in Kenya and Uganda in 1947, and Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1948. The Kenya Film Unit was attached to the Kenya Information Department. Most of its early productions were documentaries released as part of the campaign against the Mau Mau Movement. Others were "Safari" documentaries aimed at promoting tourism in Kenya. It produced 16 mm. films for showing to Africans, and 35 mm. news materials to world newsreel subscribers. Uganda started its own productions in 1955. In 1951, the Tanganyika government set in motion an experiment to produce locally made entertainment films. A commercial company was commissioned to produce these films in the territory to a story line provided by the Tanganyika government. During a period of two-and-half year, sufficient films were made to provide four complete entertainment programmes. The stories of the full-length features include: *Wageni Wema*, the adventure of a coastal family who leave their overworked land and finally settle down among the Masai; *Mela Tuakwenda*, a village drama of love and hate; *Chalo Amerudi*, a story portraying the confusion that may arise in an educated African when the call of a job in town conflicts with his duties as head of

a family living in the village. Film show programmes were supplemented with documentaries and newsreels provided or produced by the Tanganyika Film Unit. The casts of these films were made up of Africans, and the experiment has shown that local feature films can be made at a low cost.

In 1948, the Central African Council, an inter-territorial advisory body which linked the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland before federation, set up the Central African Film Unit to produce films to assist in the advancement of Africans in Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and also to make a limited number of tourist promotion films. The Unit was later inherited by the government of the Central African Federation. From the beginning, the Central African Film Unit made most of their films in colour, using 16 mm. kodachrome films, which were sent to Johannesburg in South Africa for processing. As there are seven main language groups in the region, most of the films produced were silent films with local commentators serving as narrators. A few sound version were produced with an English commentary. The majority of the Unit's production were educational and informational films (Central Office of Information Bulletin, No. R. 3161, October, 1955: 7; Pearson, 1948: 22-27).

To sum up this section, the CFU made a number of contributions to the introduction of instructional cinema into Anglophone Africa. After its war propaganda mandate the post-war phase of the CFU witnessed the establishment sub-Units in almost all British colonies in Africa. Most of the productions based in the colonies used indigenous personnel. The CFU also initiated a popular form of film exhibition, the Mobile Film Units (MFUs), which took films to the rural areas thereby making it possible for rural dwellers in Africa to have an early exposure to the cinema. Unfortunately, since Independence, most of the MFUs have either completely ceased operations or where they still operate, they have become only occasional callers at the rural areas. The CFU also laid the foundation upon which most of the Anglophone African countries' state- owned film corporations were established after Independence. In West Africa where the CFU held a Film Training School, it provided the basic

training for the first batch of filmmakers and technicians in the region. The Accra Film Training School also helped to establish the Grierson tradition of documentary film making in countries like Nigeria and Ghana which currently produce high quality documentary films geared towards mass instruction and social mobilisation. Most of these films are however shown on television thereby making it impossible for poor rural dwellers without television sets to benefit. In the area of feature film production, the aesthetic influence of the Grierson documentary tradition has been noted in the works of Sam Aryetey and Adamu Halilu, both erstwhile students of the Accra Film Training School.

6.2.2. Post-colonial Film Production Structures and Sponsorship Policies in Anglophone Africa.

The bulk of current Anglophone African films are produced within the West African sub-region, principally from Nigeria and Ghana. These two countries have set up their own film corporations, with modern production facilities for indigenous film production. In Ghana, for instance, the Nkrumah regime built a very sophisticated film production infrastructure between 1957 and 1966. The facilities provided include editing studios, and 16 mm. and 35 mm. processing laboratories. When the facilities were completed, most Ghanaian directors were still inexperienced, so foreign directors made use of them. Post-Independence Ghana has also set up its own film school, the National Film and Television Institute (NAFTI), with the assistance of the Federal Republic of Germany. The Ghana Film Industry Corporation (GFIC) and NAFTI manage the distribution, censorship, training, and production of documentaries and information films in Ghana. In addition to the production facilities set up by the Nkrumah regime, the GFIC also inherited the facilities of the old Gold Coast Film Unit. With regards to the general quality of production facilities available in Ghana, Diawara has noted that

with GFIC alone, Ghana is better equipped than all of the other West African states, and it is capable of turning out more than 12 features a year. Ghanaian film makers trained at NAFTI and

abroad find their first employment at GFIC and GBC [Ghana Broadcasting Corporation] (Diawara, 1992: 118).

So far, the Ghanaian directors who have been able to direct their films by making use of the state-owned production facilities of GFIC include: Sam Aryetey who directed *No Tears for Ananse* (1968); Egbert Adjesu, *I Told You So* (1970); Kwate Nee-Owoo, *You Hide Me* (1971), *Struggle for Zimbabwe* (1974) and *Angela Davis* (1976); King Ampaw, *They Call It Love* (1972), *Kukurantumi* (1983) and *Juju or Nana Akoto* (1986). The most reputable Ghanaian director is Kwaw Ansah, and his film, *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (1980) was shown in Ghana and other African countries where it was well received (Diawara, 1992: 118; Bachy, 1987: 55-56; Pfaff, 1988: 11-18). Most of these productions were self-financed. The GFIC however makes its facilities available free of charge to Ghanaian filmmakers.

In Nigeria, the complementary role of television broadcasting to the film industry needs to be acknowledged. Television broadcasting was introduced to Africa by the Obafemi Awolowo regime of the old Western Region of Nigeria when it set up Africa's first television station, Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in Ibadan on October 31, 1959. Both the Eastern and Northern Regions soon followed suit with the Eastern Nigeria Television (ENTV) Enugu on October 1960, and the Radio Kaduna Television (RKTV) Kaduna in March 1962. In 1961, the Federal Government invited NBC International, New York, to set up a Federal Television Station in Lagos, and so the Nigerian Television Services (NTS), later changed to (NTV) Lagos, was established in April 1962 at Victoria Island, Lagos. The Midwest Television (MTV), later changed to (NTV) Benin, was set up in April 1973. In 1976, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria decided to take over the ten television stations in the country. Decree number 24 of 1977 was promulgated to establish a government agency to coordinate the activities of television broadcasting in Nigeria. This agency is called the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA). The agency later took over the existing television stations and also began to establish new ones in new states or in states that had none. At present, almost

all the thirty states in Nigeria have two television stations - one owned by the Federal Government of Nigeria and called (NTA) station, and the other by the state government. Most of the states decided to set up their own television and radio stations during the period of the civilian government of President Shehu Shagari because they felt the Federal Government was enjoying an undue advantage over them through a monopoly of information transmission. Most of these television stations show films as part of their programme schedules, and most importantly, it is through television broadcast that most instructional and mass mobilisation films are shown. The MFUs which were very effective during the colonial period as sources of film exhibition, especially in rural areas, have been abandoned. Television has also affected the level of cinema attendance in Nigeria. Most families now prefer to watch television programmes within the safety and privacy of their homes.

To return to film, the Ministries of Information at the state level have a substantial amount of control over the production, distribution, and exhibition of documentary films. The FFU however trains the states' Film Units' personnel as well as supplying them with most of their film equipment and Mobile Cinema Vans. The Federal Ministry of Information identified the main objectives of the FFU as the production of newsreels and documentaries for the MFUs, public cinema, and the television. According to Mgbejume, the films were designed specifically to accomplish the following goals:

- (1) Publishing the activities and objectives of the Federal Government of Nigeria. These activities and objectives are designed to lead to a better and greater appreciation of government operations by the Nigerian populace.
- (2) Helping to educate the public on methods of improving its way and standard of living. This would be done through films on improved farming techniques, health schemes, factory methods and techniques, social organisation, etc.
- (3) Portraying the achievements of our culture both locally and internationally.
- (4) Informing the public of news events in and outside of Nigeria (cited in Mgbejume: 45).

The FFU consists of eight departments. These include: Film Direction, Scripting, Camera and Sound, Editing, Laboratory, Exhibition, and Maintenance. The Camera section further includes sub-sections comprising Still Camera Section, Animation Section, and Live Action Section. Among the films produced by the FFU since independence, two films by Bayo Imeovbere are noteworthy. These are, *Lagos* (1965) and *Nigeria* (1968). According to Françoise Balogun, *Nigeria* shows fine technical quality and great sensitivity. It takes us around Nigeria from the Arogungun Festival to the Museum in Ile-Ife, and from the palace of the Oba of Benin, to the mosque in Kano. In a report published by the FFU, which covers three years, October 1, 1979 to March 31, 1983, the Unit produced twenty-five documentaries, sixty-five news magazines, and three hundred and ninety news items (Balogun, 1987: 22-23). Unfortunately, many of these productions do not get to the public partly because there is no policy making it compulsory for cinema houses to show a documentary film alongside a feature film in a single bill, and partly because there is no policy also making it compulsory for the Federal Government owned NTA stations to include these documentaries in their programme schedules.

One of the most important private documentary films about Nigeria is, *Nigeria: Culture in Transition* (1963), a twenty-five minute dramatised documentary which reviews Nigeria's performing and fine arts, from antiquity up to 1964, showing the country's music, dance, drama, literature, painting, sculpture, etc. The dramatised portion of the documentary was adapted from Wole Soyinka's play, *The Strong Breed*. The film was produced by Esso World Theatre and it starred seasoned Nigerian actors and actresses of the 1960 Ibadan Mask, a theatre company formed by Wole Soyinka. Also included in the cast were veteran television actors, actresses, and producers. These include big names such as Yemi Lijadu, a prominent television personality in Lagos, and Betty Okotie, a very talented television and stage actress. Those in supporting roles include Segun Olusola and Ralph Okpara, both of whom were at this time prominent television producers. Other members of the cast include Rufus Bayo, a renowned

painter, and Tokunbo Odunjo and Julie Olamijulo. When the film was premiered at the Federal Palace Hotel in Victoria Island, Lagos, in April 1964, many important politicians, civil servants, professionals, business tycoons, and diplomats were present. Though it was privately financed the film has since been incorporated into the corpus of FFU films. Another important documentary in the category of *Transition*, is *In Search of Myself* (1965) produced by the United Nation Television, in which Nigerian writers and artists discussed the link and conflicts between tradition and modernity. The film featured renowned Nigerian literary writers and artistic figures such as Chinua Achebe, Onwura Nzekwu, Cyprian Ekwensi, Dennis Nwoko, Simon Okeke, and Duro Ladipo. The main question which they addressed include the impact of modernity on traditional cultural practices and the problems faced by literary writers and fine artists (Mgbejume: 68).

Apart from these private productions, the FFU has since the 1980s produced many documentaries of which the most significant are: *Nigeria's First Executive President* (1980), a documentary on the swearing in ceremony of Nigeria's first Executive President, Alhaji Shehu Shagari; *Framework for Survival* (1981), which shows the efforts of the Federal Government towards the "Green Revolution" project geared towards general improvement of agricultural production; *Progressive Years* (1981), a silver jubilee anniversary film; *22nd Independence Celebration at Abuja* (1982), a documentary on independence day celebration in Nigeria's new Federal Capital, Abuja (Balogun: 23).

The Federal Government manages the film industry through five government agencies. They include: the Federal Film Unit (FFU), the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC), the National Film Distribution Company (NFDC), the Federal Censor Board, and the National Film Archive. The NFC came into statutory existence with the promulgation of Decree No. 61 of 1979 by the Federal Military Government headed by General Olusegun Obasanjo. However, it was the civilian government of President Shehu Shagari that brought the NFC into actual existence through an enabling Act in

1982. Since the creation of the NFC, the profit oriented ventures of the FFU have been inherited by the NFC. The FFU is now solely concerned with the production of documentaries. The NFC also inherited all the equipment which the FFU had procured for the setting up of film processing laboratory. The NFDC has since become the Commercial Department of the NFC. The following are the stated objectives of the NFC:

the principal objective of the Nigerian Film Corporation is to act as the nucleus of a vital nation-wide motion picture industry. Rather than rival independent producers, the Corporation will use its resources to encourage and promote all film makers not only by financial assistance wherever possible, but by creating a larger market through the expansion of cinema distribution and encouragement of a movie-going culture. The NFC also hopes, through its programmes and activities, to expand the range of creative expression by talented Nigerians, young and old, and to explore all aspects of creative, cultural, entertainment, health and social development through existing as well as new uses of cinema and its subsidiary forms... (cited in Ekwuazi, 1987: 36-37).

The appointment of Bredan Shehu as the General Manager of the NFC in 1985 can be considered a turning point for progress in the history of the NFC. Since his appointment, the NFC has moved its headquarters from Lagos to Jos, Plateau State, its statutory location. The NFC is now the owner of an ultra-modern comprehensive colour film processing laboratory for both 16 mm. and 35 mm. films. The NFC is currently building a National Film Archive in Jos, where films made in the country will be preserved. The NFC has also successfully retrieved from various oversea agencies and laboratories, film negatives and sound tracks held by such bodies but belonging to the FFU or States' Film Units. These retrieved negatives and sound tracks comprise part of the initial stock of the National Film Archive. The NFC also offers technical and sometimes financial assistance to Nigerian filmmakers, and makes its facilities available to them.

The NFC produced ten documentaries between 1988 and 1989. One of them, *The Story So Far*, won a special award at the 1990 Pyongyang Film Festival of the Non-Aligned and Developing Countries held in North Korea. The NFC has also entered into bilateral agreements with three countries, Angola (1986), Ghana (1989) and Russia

(1989) so as to offer Nigerian filmmakers an opportunity for wider scope of operation.

Its current project is a compilation of a comprehensive list of the following:

- (1) Available filmmaking facilities in the country.
- (2) Active/trained filmmakers, including those employed by the various television stations.
- (3) All film production companies in the country.
- (4) A list of all cinema houses in Nigeria (Ekwuazi, 1987: 44-45).

Beside the NFC facilities there is also a Rivers State Government owned colour film processing laboratory for both 16 mm. and 35 mm. films in Port Harcourt. The old four regions and a few of the new states also have production facilities beside those inherited by the FFU from the CFU. There is also a privately owned 16 mm. colour film laboratory, Latola Films, in Ikeja, Lagos.

The first attempt by government to regulate the film industry in Nigeria was made in 1912 with the proposed "Theatre and Public Performance Regulation Ordinance, 1912", initiated nine years after the first film was shown to the public. The law failed to reach the Legislative Council of Nigeria because of public opposition. However, in 1933, the first Cinematographic Ordinance No. 20 was passed by the Council. The law became effective on April 1, 1934. The law titled "An Ordinance for the Better Regulation and Control of Cinematograph and Similar Exhibitions and Posters Advertising Such Exhibitions, and Purposes Connected Therewith", applied to both the Lagos Colony and the rest of Nigeria. The law created a censorship committee selected from the board of censors. The board governed the exhibition or showing of pictures or related optical effects produced by means of a cinematograph equipment and film designated for use with cinematograph equipment .

The 1933 Cinematograph Ordinance No.20 was amended in 1934, 1941, 1944, 1945, and the 1963 Act was modelled after it. The law presently in operation in Nigeria is the Cinematograph (Film Censorship) Regulations Act of 1963. It was amended in 1964, with the regulations taking effect from April 1, 1964. Under this law, films dealing with sex, crime, religion, and controversial racial issues are liable to possible censorship.

The owner of the censored film however has a right to appeal for a further hearing. The 1963 Act replaced all former film censorship laws in Nigeria. The law is operated through the Federal Film Censorship Board. Parts I and III of the law apply throughout Nigeria while Part II apply only to Lagos (Ekwuazi, 1987: 151-183; Balogun, 1987: 17; Mgbejume, 1989: 57).

Though the Federal Government of Nigeria presently owns the bulk of film production facilities in the country it does not get involved in feature film production. The facilities are set up by the government as part of its policy of establishing a self-sustaining film industry in Nigeria. Its productions, as earlier noted, are essentially documentaries. Commercial feature film production is carried out by private film production companies set up by individual Nigerian filmmakers. The first such private film production company established in Nigeria is Calpenny Nigeria Films Ltd, established in 1965 by Francis Oladele. Calpenny in conjunction with Herald Productions (USA), Omega Films (Sweden), Film Three (West Germany), and Nigram Corporation (USA), produced *Kongi's Harvest* (Ossie Davis, 1970) and *Bullfrog in the Sun* (Jason Poland, 1971). Though both films were adapted from works by Nigerian writers - *Kongi's Harvest* from a play of that title by Wole Soyinka and *Bullfrog in the Sun*, an adaptation of two of Achebe's novels, *Things Fall Apart* and *No Longer at Ease* - they are not considered Nigerian films even though the casts of both films are made up principally of Nigerians because they were directed by foreign directors. As Ossie Davis who directed *Kongi's Harvest* is an African-American, he directed the film with an African-American audience in mind and this greatly affected his interpretation of Soyinka's play. The film was not well received in Nigeria. As Hyginus Ekwuazi puts it:

The point is that Ossie Davis' *Kongi's Harvest* is a film that fosters the West's stereotype about the rest of us. Political demise, it avows, stems out of an endemic corruption; political power out of the barrel of a gun - and the military on the corridors of power, this translates into a coming and going that goes *ad nauseum*... In rhythm, style and texture, *Kongi's Harvest* is a film overtly aimed at a foreign audience, and the action-theme draws heavily from the stereotype in the conditioned imagination of this audience (Ekwuazi: 24).

Soyinka himself, who starred in the lead role of Kongi in the film, has denounced it as being unfaithful to the script he wrote for the screen adaptation of the play (Diawara, 1992: 125) The film was however well received by African-American audiences and a review of its premiere show in Washington D.C. published in the *Washington Post* of June 16, 1972, states that

for many among the mostly black members of the audience, last night was an introduction to the African scene as viewed by Africans themselves. Over a wine cheese and cake buffet after the showing, representatives of Washington's black intellectual and university community - their own dress revealing the spectacle of clothing in the film - predicted success for the black film making (cited in Arologun, 1979: 30).

Whatever misgivings Nigerian film critics may have against *Kongi's Harvest*, its theme of abuse of power by post-colonial African leaders, is still as relevant today in most African countries as it was when it was first released in 1972. It is the lack of democracy, greed for and abuse of power, that creates the unending circle of coups and counter-coups with little to show by way of development. The second film co-produced by Calpenny, *Bullfrog in the Sun*, was not released in Nigeria because it included materials that dealt with the Nigerian civil war and the ill-fated Biafran Republic. Both novels upon which the film was adapted were pre-civil war novels but the director cojoined the pre-civil war narratives with those of the civil war. Since the film was shot immediately after the war, the Nigerian government considered it too early for such an emotional topic as a recently concluded civil war to be used as material for a film. For this reason, the film never got shown in Nigeria.

Controversies also dogged *Son of Africa* (1971) dubbed by its producers, Fed Films Ltd, a Lebanese/Nigerian production company, Nigeria's first full-length feature film. As a matter of fact, the film can be qualified as a Lebanese film set in Lagos. The main actors/actresses, with the exception of Funsho Adeolu, were Lebanese, and "the theme of the film - the fight against currency moulders - was not tackled from a Nigerian point of view" (Balogun: 50). The second production by Fed Films, *Golden Women* (1971) also starred mostly Lebanese women and it was not well received in Nigeria.

Emmanuel Hart, in a review published in the *Daily Times* of September 2, 1970, states that, "on seeing the preview of *Son of Africa* at the Federal Film Unit, Ikoyi, on Friday August 21, one question which I still cannot find an answer to is whether the title of the film should be *Son of Africa* or more appropriately 'Daughters of Lebanon'. Because the whole film is dominated by Lebanese belly dancers" (cited in Balogun: 50).

Nigerian directed feature films began to emerge from the middle of the 1970s with the simultaneous production in 1975 of Ola Balogun's *Amadi* - the first full-length feature in a Nigerian language - and Sanya Dosunmu's *Dinner with the Devil*. Balogun who is the most renowned Nigerian filmmaker, is a graduate of the Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques (IDHEC), Paris. He is also considered the most prolific African film director, and has, in his over twenty-year career in the cinema, directed, by the last count, twenty films of which half are full-length feature films (Balogun: 55-68; Pfaff, 1988: 29). Balogun's first feature film, *Alpha* (1972), was shot in Paris with an international cast comprising mostly black diasporan actors. Before directing *Amadi* (1975), he had directed a series of documentaries on Nigerian culture and tradition. They include: *Fire in the Afternoon* (1971), recalling the festival celebrations in honour of the mythical heroine, Moremi, of Ile-Ife; *Thundergod* (1972), dedicated to the worship of Shango, the Yoruba god of thunder; *Nupe Masquerade* (1972), a traditional festival masque performances of the Nupe people of Nigeria; *In the Beginning* (1972), another documentary which focuses on the Yoruba myth of creation; and *Owuama* (1973), which deals with the traditional festival masque performances of the Kalabari people of Nigeria. Other non-ethnographic documentaries include: *One Nigeria* (1969), in support of a united Nigeria on the outbreak of the civil war; *Les Ponts de Paris* (The Bridges of Paris, 1971); *Eastern Nigeria Revisited* (1973), a survey of the Eastern Region after the civil war; *Vivre* (To Live, 1974), dedicated to a friend and victim of a car accident; and *Nigersteel* (1975), a documentary on Nigersteel Company based in Enugu, the capital of the Eastern Region of Nigeria.

Of all Balogun's feature films, the most popular within Nigeria are those based on Yoruba language and mythologies, and using actors/actresses of the popular Yoruba Travelling Theatre. They include films such as the highly commercially successful, *Ajani-Ogun* (1976), a story of a young hunter, Ajani Ogun, who fights a vicious and corrupt politician; *Iya Ominira* (Fight for Freedom, 1977), adapted from a novel by Adebayo Faleti, is a story of a tyrannical king bannished from his kingdom by his subjects; *Aiye* (1979), tells the story of a struggle between the forces of good and evil in a Yoruba village, with the forces of good and evil represented in the film respectively by a *babalawo* (traditional healer and priest) and witches.

Oru Mooru (1982), is a moral fable structured very much like Amos Tutuola's novel, *The Palm-wine Drinkard*. It tells the story of a poor villager, Lamidi, who after having been duped several times on account of his credulity, is so depressed that he attempts to commit suicide. After several unsuccessful attempts he finally plunges into a lagoon to drown and finds himself in the land of the dead. Since it is not his appointed time to die, Death himself sends him to the palace of the Queen of Joy who endows him with enormous wealth and sends him back to earth. Unfortunately, he makes a fatal mistake of wanting even more money to show off in front of his friends and this leads to his ruin. At the precise moment when Death is about to catch him, he emerges with horror from the coma of his unsuccessful suicide (Balogun: 67).

Balogun's other feature films include the internationally well received *Black Goddess* (1978) which won a prize from the International Catholic Office of Cinema as well as Best Film Music prize at the 1980 Cathage Film Festival. The film deals with a mystical story of slavery and reincarnation. *Cry Freedom* (1981), shot in Ghana in 1980, is a liberation struggle film, adapted from a novel, *Carcasses for the Hounds*, by the Kenyan writer, Meja Mwangi. The film tells the story of a group of guerrilla fighters who are engaged in a liberation struggle against colonial rule. *Musik-Man* (1976) was an unsuccessful pidgin English adaptation of *Ajani-Ogun*; and *Money Power* (Owo L'Agba, 1982) won its leading actress, Clarion Chukwura, the prize of Best Female Actress at

the Pan-African Film Festival at Ougadougou, Burkina Faso (Pfaff, *ibid*: 21). Most of Balogun's films are financed either by bank loans, income from his films or through direct investment by private business tycoons. Like other Nigerian filmmakers, his films are produced by his own production company, Afrocult Foundation. As a result of his non-reliance on government sources to fund his films, he has been one of the most vehement critics of his Francophone colleagues whose films are principally financed and produced by the French Ministry of Cooperation. He is on record for observing that

film budgets provided by non-commercial sources such as governments have, in many cases, the disadvantages of opening the door to some form of political pressure and censorship ... and it may lead to favouritism and other forms of nepotism ... There are obvious dangers in relying on foreign sources for film finance, the danger of paternalistic influence ... I have seen some of my colleagues fall into inextricable contradictions ... how can you take money from the French government [in this case the French Ministry of Cooperation] to make films that denounce French colonial presence in Africa ? (cited in Pfaff: 23).

Apart from Balogun, another notable Nigerian filmmaker is Adamu Halilu, graduate of the Film Training School, Accra, Ghana, and former General Manager of the old Northern Region Film Unit and later, producer and film director at the FFU, Kaduna, in 1968. In 1982, he was appointed General Manager of the Nigerian Film Corporation (NFC). His films to date include, *Child Bride* (1971), which attacks the practice, carried out mostly in Northern Nigeria, of early marriages and pregnancies of girls sometimes as young as eleven or twelve years of age. His first major feature film was *Shehu Umar* (1977). This was the first Hausa language feature and it therefore follows the trail of Nigerian language films already blazed by Ola Balogun's *Amadi*. *Shehu Umar* was Nigeria's official entry at the 2nd World Black Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC 77) held in Lagos. It was produced by the NFC and tells the epic story of an Hausa religious leader, Shehu Umar; it was based on an Hausa historical novel of the same title by the first Prime Minister of Nigeria, Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, adapted for the screen by Umaru Ladan. Diawara has observed with respect to the film that

even though *Shehu Umar* is important because of its use of Hausa tradition and historiography and its glorification of Islam and the Hausa past, it risks letting the spectator down because of its length (140 minutes) and repetitious scenes (Diawara: 122).

In spite of its historical and artistic importance, *Shehu Umar* was not screened commercially in Nigeria, possibly because of government's sensitivity to Nigeria's diverse ethnic and religious composition. Another important historical film by Halilu is *Kanta of Kebbi* (1978), a co-production between Halilu's production company, Haske Films, and the Sokoto State Government. The film tells the story of Mohammed Kanta, founder of the Kebbi Empire. Kebbi, situated in the present day Niger State was a vassal state of the powerful Songhai Empire which covers most of the countries of the savannah belt of West Africa, but Mohammed Kanta revolted against the iron-rule of Askia Mohammed Toure (1492-1538) ruler of the Empire and built an independent powerful Kebbi Empire. The film chronicles Mohammed Kanta's long reign which is full of mysteries, predictions and magic rites, a fascinating episode in West African history (Balogun, *ibid*: 71). Halilu's next film, *Moment of Truth* (1981), was also a co-production between Haske Films and the Sokoto State Government. It was adapted from a play produced by Sokoto State Television and entered for the National Television Productions Festival of 1975. The film tells the story of a woman who loses her only child through medical negligence. She attempts to take revenge on the doctor's only daughter but at the last moment common sense prevails. His last film, *Zainab*, was being shot when he was appointed General Manager of the NFC in 1982.

Adamu Halilu was a product of the John Grierson school of documentary and most of his documentaries bear the hallmark of the stylistics of this school - a basic narrative account of a particular social process geared towards mass enlightenment (Lovell, 1972: 28). This stylistic pattern can be discerned in his documentary films such as, *It Pays to Care* (1955), *Hausa Village* (1958), *Northern Horizon* (1959), *Durbar Day* (1960), *Giant in the Sun* (1960), *Rinderpest* (1963), *Welcome Change* (1965), *Tourist Delight* (1967), *Back to Land* (1967), *Pride of a Nation* (1974) and *Black Heritage* (1977). Most of Halilu's productions were produced either by the NFC as in

the case of *Shehu Umar* or co-produced by the Sokoto State Government. This is however an exceptional case because the bulk of Nigeria's feature films are produced by independent filmmakers who source their funds like other private commercial business undertakings in the country.

The next important Nigerian filmmaker, beside Balogun and Halilu, is Eddy Ugbomah. He studied Journalism and Drama in London, where he later additionally also studied Film and Television Production. He later worked with the BBC and played small roles in films such as *Dr No*, *Guns of Batasi*, *Sharpsville Massacre* and also formed a black theatre group in London. His first film, *The Rise and Fall of Dr Oyenusi* (1977), was inspired by the story of a notorious Nigerian armed robber who was popularly known as Dr Oyenusi. Since 1976, Ugbomah has shot eight full-length 16 mm. feature films. *The Mask* (1979) deals with attempts by a Nigerian agent to retrieve an ancient Benin Royal Mask of Queen Adesua which was stolen by the British expedition force which sacked the city of Benin in 1797. The film has been described as an unimaginative imitation of the James Bond series (Diawara: 123). His next film, *The Death of a Black President* (1983), was a representation of the historical events which led to the assassination of General Ramat Murtala Mohammed, head of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria between July 1975 and February 1976. Murtala Mohammed is a highly venerated civil war hero and his brief rule is often generally regarded by most Nigerians as a golden but brief episode in Nigerian history. He is the only trans-ethnic and religious hero in the country. Some of Ugbomah's other films include: *Oil Doom* (1980), *The Boy is Good* (1982), *Vengeance of the Cult* (1982), *Bulos 80* (1982). Other Nigerian film directors worth mentioning include, Jab Adu, director of *Bisi Daughter of the River* (1977), which launched the acting career of Patricia Ebigwei, now known internationally as Patti Boulay, and Wole Soyinka, director of *Blues for a Prodigal* (1984), a political satire on the corruption and administrative ineptitudes of the era of President Shehu Shagari.

Presently, there are two types of cinematic practices existing side by side in Nigeria. The first practice to emerge is a product of Western-trained directors and can be categorised as an élitist cinema due to its use of English as medium of expression, and its choice of urban milieu as subject matter. While films which belong to this élitist practice gain international recognition through representation at international film festivals because of the connections of their Western trained directors, the films are however largely commercial failures in Nigeria. The second popular cinematic practice, now referred to as Folklore Cinema, was actually launched by Ola Balogun when he directed *Ajani-Ogun*, a film in the Yoruba language adapted from a popular Yoruba Travelling Theatre play, in his search for a more popular form of cinema. It must be emphasised however that it is not just the use of a Nigerian language as a medium of cinematic expression that guarantees the largely Yoruba dominated Folklore Cinema its popularity. Rather, its popularity derives from the fact that it is an outgrowth of an already well established popular professional Yoruba Travelling Theatre tradition that had its own form of star-system with well-managed commercially successful theatre companies. A detailed historical account of the Yoruba Travelling Theatre and its companies has been produced by Biodun Jeyifo (1984). It is this professional theatre tradition that has now transferred its practices to the film industry.

Most of the films categorised under the practice of Folklore Cinema are actually stage-tested commercial successes. These stage successes together with their immensely popular stars ensure their popularity and commercial success in the cinema as well. Presently, the base of Folklore Cinema is predominantly in the Yoruba speaking states of Nigeria but the films enjoy wide audience patronage across the country. Folklore cinema, as the name denotes, derives its narrative form and themes from folk tradition, myth, legends, oral narratives of deified heros/heroines, moral fables, traditional religious practices and rites, etc. The commercial success of Folklore Cinema therefore derives from its use of Yoruba mytho-poetics in the form of traditional drama and cultic rites, festival rites and masquerade displays, rites of birth, adolescence, adulthood, old

age and passage, music, song and dance, magical and supernatural agencies, etc as subject matter or materials of filmic narration. Its use of narrative techniques of integrated performances embracing music, song and dance, etc, fulfils Africa's concept of an integrated performance rooted in religious beliefs and traditional cultural practices. An African concept of a total narrative performance requires the incorporation of elements of narrative performances such as music, song and dance and the inducement of audience participation by a narrative agent. The use of music, song and dance, is to punctuate the performance by serving to reinforce the mood of the narrative and enhance audience participation. If the music is sad then it should make characters within the narrative sad, and if it is joyful, it should be able to induce spontaneous participation in the form of singing and dancing by character within the narrative. In the case of an oral narrative or dramatic performance, it should be able to induce spontaneous participation from the diegetic audience and characters, and the witnessing spectator. It is for this reason that music that grows naturally from within the narrative is preferred to extradiegetic atmospheric music. Narration in Folklore Cinema is therefore as complex as an African oral narratives, full of parallel tales and digressions in the form of delegated subjective narration, flashbacks, dreamstates, trances and possessions, ghosts and lots of photographically simulated manifestations of gods and other malevolent and benevolent spirits. It is these narrative incorporations which ensures their popularity and commercial success. Folklore cinema is the most prolific and commercially self-sustaining and viable cinematic practice in Africa. Most of its productions have now been studied in detail by Onokoome Okome in his 1990 doctoral thesis of the University of Ibadan.

Though the bulk of Anglophone African films are produced by Nigeria and Ghana, the East African nations of Kenya and Tanzania have started to lay the foundation of their film industries by establishing national film corporations and film training centres. In Kenya, for instance, two government agencies, the Kenya Film Corporation (KFC) and the Kenya Institute of Mass Communication (KIMC) -

established with the help of the Federal Republic of Germany - have started to establish the rudimentary production infrastructures, and train the personnel for a film industry. The KFC, like other corporations of its kind in Anglophone Africa, is an outgrowth of the old CFU. It operates MFUs for rural film shows like its counterparts in West Africa. The newly established KIMC also has its own mini television studios and 16 mm. production facilities for the training of television personnel and filmmakers. The KIMC has also produced tourist attraction documentaries such as *Waters of Mombasa*, *Passport to Adventure*, *Immashoi of Masai*, all directed by Kenya's best known director, Sao Gamba. Gamba also directed Kenya's first full-length feature film, *Kolormask*, a film about a Kenyan student who returns home with a white wife and finds his marriage threatened by cultural differences. *Kolormask* was entered for competition at the 1987 FESPACO and was criticised for being too exotic in its emphasis on documenting African culture. Kenya's first female director, Ann Mungai, trained at KIMC, has also directed a dramatised documentary, *Wekesa at Crossroad* and a full-length feature, *Saikati* (1992). Kenya also has a fledgling Indian culture based cinema. Films by directors of Kenya Indian origin include: *Mlevi* (1968) and *Mzembo* (1969) by Ramesh Shah and *Rise and Fall of Amin Dada* (1980) by Sharad Patel (Diawara: 117; Bachy, 1987: 58).

Tanzania has an Audio Visual Institute donated to the country by the government of Denmark in 1974. The Institute has 16 mm. production facilities for the training of filmmakers and technicians. It has also produced instructional and publicity documentaries. In 1985, a Tanzanian co-production, *Arusi ya Mariama* (1983), directed by Nanga Yoma Ngoge and Ron Mulvihill (US), was awarded the prize for Best Short Film at the Pan-African Film Festival (FESPACO), Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The film deals with the conflict between tradition and modern forms of medical treatment. Zimbabwe has also established a Film Training Centre with production facilities for training filmmakers and technicians with the assistance of the Federal Republic of Germany. So far, filmmakers trained at the Centre have restricted their productions to

mostly newsreels, documentaries, and short films. In the Sudan, film production started in the 1950s when two black Sudanese students sent to study cinema in London, Gadalla Gubara and Kamal Ibrahim, returned and helped to establish the Sudanese Film Unit in 1952. The Unit has produced mostly documentaries and educational films. Gubara, who received further training in California, has since his return, directed a full-length feature film, *Tagoog* (1982), a love story set in the hills near the Red Sea. According to Bachy, the film was very well received. Another Sudanese who has directed a feature film is Anwar Hashim, and his film, *Oyon* (1984), set in Cairo, is a love story based on Sudanese student life in the city (Bachy: 57; Diawara: 116).

With regard to film sponsorship and production policies in Anglophone Africa, most governments seem content to provide only the production infrastructures needed for the development of a film industry. They are not interested in giving financial aid to filmmakers. The only form of aid available is allowing filmmakers free access to production facilities. They are also not interested in getting involved in commercial feature film production. Commercial cinema is considered to be an avenue for private investment. The only form of film production sanctioned by most Anglophone African governments is documentary and instructional film production. In Francophone African countries, as we shall soon find out, most governments have set up film production agencies through which they provide funds for their filmmakers.

6.3. Film Production Structures and Sponsorship Policies in Francophone Africa.

6.3.1. Post-Colonial Film Production in Francophone Africa.

Film production in Francophone African countries is a post-Independence phenomenon. Unlike the British and the Belgians who had colonial film policies and established production facilities, and even made an effort to train indigenous filmmakers and technicians, the French had no similar policies for her colonies nor did they establish production facilities or trained indigenous personnel. The only intervention France made in the colonial era was the promulgation of a decree called "Le Decret Laval". The Laval

decree was initiated by the French minister of the colonies Pierre Laval, to control the content of films shot in Africa and minimise the involvement of Africans in filmmaking. Diawara has observed that though the decree was rarely applied, it was a panic measure taken by the French colonial government with the advent of sound film in 1928 to contain the revolutionary impact which the medium might have in the hands of African nationalists. The decree was therefore directed at limiting the entrance of Africans into filmmaking and restricting the filmmaking activities of French left-wing African sympathisers. Indeed, the first film censored under the decree was *Afrique 50* (1950), a documentary by the Frenchman, Robert Vautier. The film, which was clandestinely shot in the Ivory Coast, is about the French repression of an African liberation movement, Rassemblement Democratique Africain. The second film censored under the decree was *Les Statues meurent aussi* (1955), a documentary by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais, both key players of the French New Wave. The film was produced by the famous African publication house, Présence Africain, and it examines the case of African statues taken out of their context and put in European museums. The violent montage technique used by the filmmakers to denounce the brutality of French colonialism has been praised by critics (Diawara, 1992: 22-23; Andrade-Watkin, 1992).

Faced with the Laval decree barring Africans from filmmaking activities on the continent, Paulin S. Vieyra, the first African graduate of L'Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques (IDHEC), Paris, and his friends in Le Group Africain du Cinéma, had to resign themselves to making films about Africa and Africans in France. The first film by the group, *Afrique sur scène* (1955), a film about Africans in France, was shot in Paris. This documentary film, directed by Vieyra, is now cited in African film history as the first film directed by a black African. Diawara has summed up the impact of the Laval decree on post-colonial French speaking African countries thus:

the Laval decree is an illustration of the French colonial system, which had no economic, political, or cultural policy encompassing the majority of its subject and which was limited to assimilating few Africans such as Vieyra and Le Group Africain du Cinéma at the top. Thus in regard to the development of film in the colonies, where one may say that the British and the

Belgian colonial film units failed because of racism and paternalism vis-a-vis the Africans, one can say that the French were opposed to an African cinema (Diawara: 23).

French attitude to the development of African cinema did change however during the post-colonial era. France, alongside West Germany and the United States donated film production equipment to the newly-Independent countries. Guinea-Conakry which rebuffed France's offer of a union with its African colonies and gained her independence in 1958, two years before the rest of Francophone African countries, got 16mm and 35mm production facilities as a gift from West Germany. Since Francophone African countries did not inherit any production facilities from France, most of them were faced in the early sixties with the difficulties of publicising their governments' policies and programmes to their illiterate population. As a result of mass illiteracy in the newly independent nations, radio and film offered the best possible means of disseminating government policies. Though most of the countries established radio stations, film with its photographic quality was the preferred medium since it offered the people an opportunity actually to see government development projects and their executioners. However, most Francophone countries lacked film production structures and the means to acquire them, and they also lacked film technicians and in most cases, directors. It was under these circumstances that they welcomed any assistance that would enable them to acquire film production facilities and know-how. France, which understood the dire needs of her former colonies, stepped in to provide some of their immediate needs.

In 1961, the French government asked the four largest producers of newsreel in France, Les Actualités Françaises, Eclair-Journal, Gaumont Actualités, and Pathé-Magazines, to subsidise a fifth one, the Consortium Audio-visual International (CAI), which would sign a contract with the former colonies to produce their newsreels, educational films and documentaries. The CAI was then set up in Paris with post-production facilities while the erstwhile colonies were provided with partial production equipment and technicians to man them. In this manner, the newsreels were shot in the erstwhile colonies, developed and edited with sound commentaries in Paris, and then,

sent back to Africa for exhibition. The filmmakers and technicians were usually employees of Les Actualités Françaises and other organisations which subsidised the CAI productions. This arrangement lasted between 1961 to 1977.

One of the key players in the development of film production in Francophone African countries, Jean-René Debrix, has explained the role played by France in assisting her erstwhile colonies publicise their national development efforts through the cinema as follows:

keen to encourage the development of cinema in Africa, as long ago as 1961 the Ministry of Co-operation made a decision to intervene in the field of newsreels. The prime function of the cinema was seen as providing news coverage and acting as a vehicle for information, and it was felt that the first service to be rendered to the young independent African states should be to help raise the peoples' consciousness of their own national identity and unity: to enable them to see their own way of life and the rest of the world (Debrix, 1982: 44).

By 1964, all the Francophone African countries had set up film production sections attached to their ministries of information as a result of their agreement with CAI. Some of the countries such as Niger, Ivory Coast and Mali, invited internationally-renowned film directors from Canada, France and Holland to make documentaries and educational films for them. Jean Rouch and Claude Jutra were invited on several occasions to make films for Mali and Ivory Coast. Jutra made *Le Niger, jeune république* (1960), a co-production by Niger and the Office National Canadien du Film, to celebrate Niger's Independence. Canadian masters of the documentary, such as Norman MacLaren, Michael Brault and Claude Jutra, assisted Niger's pioneer filmmakers such as Moustapha Alassane and Oumarou Ganda in their first film projects. Both Alassane and Ganda also learnt their basic filmmaking techniques under Jean Rouch. However, the production arrangements with CAI, the preference for foreign directors and the emphasis placed on newsreel, documentaries and educational film production, helped to stagnate the creativity and opportunities available for the few trained indigenous directors for many years.

In broad terms, film production policies in Francophone African countries, reflect the economy policies of the countries concerned. Though most of the countries

practice *laissez-faire* or liberal economic systems, a few of them such as Guinea-Conakry, Burkina Faso and Mali, have nationalised certain sectors of their economy, like the film production sector, in keeping with their preference for a centrally-planned economy with prominent state involvement. These economic policies are therefore reflected in the film production sector of their economies. The majority of the countries which view nationalisation of any sector of the economy as a repression of free enterprise have, in keeping with their policies of non-intervention in what they perceived as a private sector activities, refused to nationalise the film production sector of their economies. For this reason, countries such as Senegal, Niger, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, etc. - paradoxically countries that have produced the bulk of internationally available Black African feature films - are yet to set up their own film production facilities. However, as a result of the pressures from indigenous filmmakers, two types of state-sponsored financial support have emerged in the so-called liberal countries. The first type of state-sponsorship practised in Senegal, Cameroon and Niger, was characterised by government facilitating filmmaking with subsidies of one form or another. The other type of state-sponsorship practised in Ivory Coast, Gabon, and the Congo, involves occasional provision of funds through state-owned national television stations.

Countries such as Guinea-Conakry, Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), which had more centrally-planned economies with a lot of government involvement in the industrial sector, have nationalised production, distribution and exhibition of films in the bid to create national cinemas. All three countries have also set up film laboratories and editing facilities in an attempt to be self-reliant in film production. One needs to emphasise the fact however that the existence of production facilities alone does not guarantee the countries that had them more film output per year than those countries that had none. Diawara, for instance, has cited the case of Guinea, which has film production facilities but has actually produced fewer films in comparison to Senegal and Ivory Coast which have none. The reason for such discrepancies seem to lie in the patterns of actual financial assistance rendered to filmmakers by the various countries concerned. The

success of those countries without production facilities however depended very much upon the financial and technical assistance that they have received from the French Ministry of Cooperation (Andrade-Watkins: 29- 33; Diawara: 57).

After the creation of the CAI in 1961, the French Ministry of Coopération established a Bureau du Cinéma at the Coopération in 1963, with Jean-René Debrix, former general director of IDHEC, as director. Before Debrix joined the Coopération, the emphasis of French cultural aid to its erstwhile colonies was in the area of literature, theatre, music, and dance. Franco-African cultural exchanges were managed in the Coopération by the Association pour le développement des échanges artistiques et culturels (ADEAC). When Debrix took charge of activities at the newly created Bureau du Cinéma, his first priority was to change the emphasis of ADEAC from literature, music and dance, to film. He succeeded in convincing people at the Coopération that the best way to assist Africans to regain their cultural identity was through the cinema.

The Bureau du Cinéma also complemented the activities of the CAI in Francophone African countries. While the CAI placed emphasis on production of newsreels and documentaries, the newly-created Bureau du Cinéma aimed at assisting independent African filmmakers in their film projects. The Bureau provided the filmmakers with funds, film equipment/technicians, and had post-production facilities at the Coopération for their use. For instance, the editing room of the Coopération, 20 rue de La Boétie, had professional editors such as Bernard Lefevre, Daniele Tessier, Paul Sequin and Andrée Daventure who worked patiently with the filmmakers. In his assessment of the contribution of the Bureau du Cinéma, toward the development of African cinema, its director, Debrix has observed that

I think any objective observer would have had to acknowledge that what has been done with integrity and, on the whole, with little cause for reproach. Between 1963 and 1975 around 185 *films* were made in French-speaking black Africa, comprising features and shorts. Some 125 of these 185 films were produced with the technical and financial assistance of the Ministry [of Co-operation] (Debrix: 44).

According to Diawara, the Ministry of Coopération, through the Bureau du Cinéma, contributed to the growth of African cinema in two ways: the Coopération could either act as the producer of a film and provide the African director with the financial and technical means, as well as technicians, or the Coopération could wait until an independent director made the film, and then pay the director for the cost of production in return for some of the distribution rights of the film. In the first case, in which the Coopération assumed the role of producer from the beginning of the project, the filmmaker was required to submit a script with a detailed explanation of the sequences which were carefully examined by a committee. The committee's role was limited to determining whether the script was cinematographically feasible or not. On the level of content, the directors were free to choose any subject they wanted. The only script rejected by Debrix on the basis of the subject matter was Sembène's *La noire de ...* (1966). Some of the early films which the Coopération produced directly include: *Point de vue I* (1965) by Urbain Dia-Moukori (Cameroon), *Concerto pour un exilé* (1967) by Désirée Ecaré (Ivory Coast), *Cabascado* (1968) by Oumarou Ganda (Niger), and *Diankhabi* (1969) by Mahama Traoré (Senegal) (Diawara: 26).

In the second case, in which the Coopération bought the right of a film that was finished or almost finished, the filmmakers acted as his or her own producer and tried to find funds from varied sources. However since there is often a lack of enthusiasm for film production funding because the cinema is not considered a priority, African filmmakers have often found it difficult to secure the necessary funding for their film projects. As a result, offers of payment of production costs or provision of funds for on-going projects by the Coopération were often gratefully accepted in return for the Coopération's rights of distribution. Some of the first directors to benefit from the Coopération's aid in this way include: Sembène's *Borom Saret* (1963), *Niaye* (1964), *La noire de ...* (1966) (Senegal) Moustapha Alassane's *Aoure* (1962), *La bague du Roi Koda* (1964), *Le retour de l'aventurier* (1966) (Niger), and Timité Bassori's *Sur la dune de la solitude* (1964) and *La femme au couteau* (1968).

According to Diawara, the aid provided by the Coopération gave many Francophone African directors the opportunity to realise their dreams as filmmakers. Within the first five years of the creation of the Bureau du Cinéma, it contributed to the production of thirty-nine films, most of which were shorts. By 1985, 185 shorts and features were made in Francophone African countries, four-fifths of which were produced with the financial and technical assistance of the Coopération. Most of the renowned and internationally-acknowledged Francophone African directors such as Ousmane Sembène, Med Hondo, Moustapha Alassane, Souleymane Cissé, Cheik Ouman Sissoko, etc., made their directorial debut under the tutelage of Debrix at the Bureau du Cinéma, even though, presently, directors such as Sembène have stopped asking the Coopération's help and have even accused its members of paternalism and imperialism.

In 1979, France temporarily stopped producing African films because most of them were becoming very critical of Francophone African governments. As a result of this development, African leaders who were worried about the influence of African films on their population, put a lot of pressure on the Giscard government to suspend aid to African filmmakers. Since the political structure in France has very strong links with those of its erstwhile colonies in Africa, the Giscard government felt that films that were critical of African governments were destroying the friendly relations France had with African leaders. One of the films affected by the suspension of aid was Souleymane Cissé prize winning film, *Finye* (1982). The Coopération had originally agreed to bear the post-production cost of *Finye* in return for the rights to distribute it on the non-commercial circuit. If all had gone according to plan, *Finye* would have been completed in 1980. But the suspension of aid made it impossible for Cissé to complete production. The Coopération's financial and technical assistance policy as it affected the production of *Finye*, reflected the ambivalence that underlied French production of African films. French post-colonial film policy toward Africa as reflected in the activities of the Coopération, is tied to the fortunes of the political party in power in metropolitan

France. The case of *Finye* illustrates this point. *Finye* is a political film that deals with the corruption and inefficiency of military regimes, students' response to them, and the clash between tradition and modernity. The film's theme, as I earlier noted, was considered to be critical of post-colonial African leaders, most of whom are military dictators. Since the Coopération could not convince radical filmmakers like Sembène or Cissé to make films which were less critical of the post-colonial state, it decided to suspend aid to the whole of Francophone African film production.

When the socialist government of Françoise Mitterand assumed power in 1980, it decided to resume aid to the "progressive" African directors, and one of the very first films to benefit from this resumption of aid, was Cissé's *Finye*. The socialist government also ordered a reappraisal of the whole structure of the Coopération's aid to African cinema. The new French policy initiated by Mitterand's technical adviser at the Coopération de-emphasised the old regime's patronage of a few filmmakers in favour of financial and technical aid channelled through the inter-African Francophone bodies such as Organisation Commune Africaine et Mauritanienne (OCAM). It was in this vein that more funds and technical equipment were made available to the OCAM sponsored Film School, the Institut Africain d'Education Cinématographique (INAFEC), in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The Coopération also decided to support branches of OCAM such as Consortium Inter-Africain de Distribution Cinématographique (CID) and Consortium Inter-Africain de Production du Film (CIPROFILM) (Diawara: 29).

The reforms were also extended to the distribution of Francophone African films. The administrators at the Coopération decided to go beyond the old regime's policy of confining African films to academic circles, cinémathèques and festivals, to exhibit them in commercial French movie theatres and air them on French television. The first film to enjoy the benefits of the reformation of the Coopération's policy was *Finye*. Cissé was reportedly given ten million francs (about twenty thousand US dollars) to advertise it. As a result of this publicity, the film was selected to compete at the 1982 Cannes Film Festival. In 1983, the film was shown commercially for six weeks in Paris.

Over 400,000 viewers have reportedly seen *Finye* (Pfaff: 54; Diawara: 29). The film has won the Grand Prizes at both the Cathage and Ouagadougou Film Festivals.

French aid to African cinema has come under attack both in France and Africa, and also by concerned historians of African cinema. In France, the attack can be categorised into two forms: those launched by bureaucrats of the in-coming socialist administration of Mitterand and those launched by ordinary French citizens. The bureaucrats of the socialist government criticised the out-going government of Giscard for giving direct aid to independent African filmmakers thereby provoking a political crisis between France and some African countries. They also argued that French aid from the Coopération under the Giscard government did not promote the establishment of an African film industry. French aid, they insisted, should have been directed through OCAM sponsored organisations, and independent directors should be recommended for French aid either by their government or by OCAM. The new bureaucrats further argued that the Coopération under Giscard was less respectful of the independence of African countries between 1963 to 1979. French aid to independent African directors was also criticised by ordinary French citizens, who argued that the exclusive focus on the aid to Francophone African countries was too narrow and unfair to other deserving filmmakers around the world. They argued that it was time for the Coopération to think globally in terms of aiding Third World countries in general rather than placing emphasis only on erstwhile colonies (Andrade-Watkins: 34-40; Diawara: 30).

Victor Bachy has also argued that French aid to independent African directors was being used by France as a neo-colonial tool for perpetuating the dependency of African countries on France. He further argues that those countries like Guinea-Conakry, which charted independent industrial policies were deliberately excluded from French aid thereby making it possible for countries like Senegal and Ivory Coast, which had no production facilities but enjoyed French aid, to produce more films than the former (Bachy: 17).

Ferid Boughedir also argues that French aid to independent African filmmakers is an indirect way of protecting the monopoly of French distributors like Compagnie Africaine Cinématographique Industrielle Commerciale (COMACICO) and Société d'Exploitation Cinématographique Africaine (SECMA). These two distributing companies owned sixty to eighty per cent of the cinema chains of the Francophone African countries. Boughedir argues that by aiding African directors, France kept them from protesting the takeover of their domestic markets by foreign distributors. The Coopération's aid made it possible for the directors to recoup their production costs thereby protecting them from worries associated with recovery of production cost (Boughedir, 1982a: 36).

Francophone African filmmakers have themselves argued that French aid to African cinema is tied to paternalism and the deliberate promotion of negative African film aesthetics. For instance, they have accused Debrix of imposing his own aesthetic view of Africa as a way of judging African films. African directors cited his open admiration for Daniel Kamwa's *Pouse Pouse* (1975), as an instance of what they considered Debrix's paternalistic and ethnocentric patronage of African cinema. *Pouse Pouse*, a comedy about the settlement of dowry in Cameroonian society, is considered by many African directors as naive and iconoclastic towards African tradition and less critical towards French cultural imperialism in Cameroon. Moreover, the film is loosely edited, which makes it inartistically repetitious. That Debrix preferred such a film and deliberately promoted it over films of Sembène, Cissé, Hondo, etc. peeved leading African directors who accused Debrix of despising African films and being opposed to the ideological and artistic maturity displayed in them. Sembène, recollecting the experiences he had with the French Centre National du Cinéma (CNC) during the production of his film *Le Mandat* (1968), went beyond the criticism of Debrix as paternalist and ethnocentrist, to attack the condition of existence of the entire French aid to African cinema. Before Sembène's experience with the CNC, the CNC's aid was restricted to French directors of the New Wave such as Jean-Luc Goddard, François

Truffaut, Chris Marker, etc., but André Malraux, the French minister of culture in 1968, granted special permission to Sembène to compete for the CNC's aid. Having won the aid, Sembène was required to take a French producer, Robert Neslé, who controlled the budget. According to Diawara, Sembène's experience with his producer was such that he decided, following the completion of *Le Mandat*, not to accept any aid from France in the future and to produce his films in Africa with African financial support (Diawara: 32). The first conflict Sembène had with Neslé was over choice of colour for the film. Sembène wanted to shoot it in black and white because he was worried about the sensational effect a colour film could bring to his story. He was also unsure about the way people would look in a colour film under African skies. The next conflict he had with Neslé resulted from his refusal to include sexual and erotic scenes in the film. Sembène took Neslé to court to settle the matter. In view of this experience, Sembène has observed that

co-production with the West is often tainted with paternalism, and it is an economic dependency which, as such, gives the West the right to view Africa in a way that I cannot bear. Sometimes, one is also coerced into consenting into commercial concessions. In a word, European often have a conception of Africa that is not ours (cited in Diawara: 32).

Sembène also decided to stop co-production with the Coopération because being a non-profit organisation, it attracts people of various ideological inclinations who want to use African films to illustrate their opinions of the continent. Thus the same film is often used to illustrate notions of African tradition and modernity, patriarchy and feminism, revolt and feudalism, etc. Sembène felt that the unrestricted distribution rights which the Coopération had over his earlier films, was both exploitative and open to manipulation of his views. Souleymane Cissé, on his part, has argued that the Coopération's pattern of distribution outlets - schools, cinémathèques, festivals, cultural centres, etc - reduce African films to sociological or anthropological documents or what he generally refers to as the confinement of African films to "cultural ghettos". He would prefer a situation in which the Coopération reduces its rights by distributing the films only in French

embassies and cultural centres in Africa, while pushing for commercial distribution in Europe (Diawara: 33).

In the general dependence of Francophone African cinema upon France, there is a major trend in sponsorship pattern of French aid worth noting: the fact that the fortune of Francophone African cinema is tied to the cultural (cinematic) policy of the political party in power in metropolitan France, and the nature of sponsorship it preferred to operate through the Ministry of Coopération's Bureau du Cinéma. Within Africa itself, two main trends can be discerned in the current development of Francophone African cinema. First, a few countries like Guinea-Conakry, Mali and Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), which have established production facilities, do not seem to have yet put in place the required financial support for aspiring and practising filmmakers. The reason for this could be because most African governments do not yet consider the film industry as a priority sector of the national economy. Second, there is the trend in countries like Senegal, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Niger, etc., which do not have production facilities but have put in place the necessary financial arrangements that ensure that their filmmakers have access to state sponsorship of their projects. In the remaining part of this section, I will be concentrating on a few chosen national cinemas such of those of Senegal, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso and Guinea-Conakry, to illustrate the two trends in the development of cinema in Francophone African countries.

Senegal was the first Francophone country to sign a production agreement with the Consortium Audio-visuel International (CAI) in 1961. The signing of the agreement led to the creation of Les Actualités Sénégalais as an affiliate body of the CAI. The agreement required CAI to provide Senegal with a cameraman/reporter to cover the events in the country. The filmed events were sent to Paris, the headquarters of the CAI, to be developed and edited, along with other African and world events being covered by the CAI. The editing and added commentaries were carried out according to the specification of the Ministry of Information of Senegal. The same arrangement operated

in Ivory Coast, Dahomey (now Republic of Benin), Togo, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, etc.

Initially, the CAI made two newsreels a month for Les Actualités Sénégalais. This was however increased to a newsreel per week in April 1962 because of a growing demand for news. Soon, even the one newsreel per week proved insufficient because it could not cover all the activities that were considered newsworthy by the different ministries. There was also the growing need for educational films and documentaries which the newsreels could not substitute. As a result, Les Actualités Sénégalais made plans to create a Service de Cinéma that would be involved in the production of documentaries and educational films. During this period also, the first set of African graduates from the French film school, the Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques (IDHEC), Paris, Paulin S. Vieyra and Blaise Senghor were also anxious to make films in their country now that they have gained Independence. Under the direction of Vieyra, several short films were financed by the Service de Cinéma. They included films on special topics ordered by the various arms of government. Films directed by Vieyra under this arrangement included, *Une nation est née* (1961), on the anniversary of Senegal's Independence, *Voyage présidentiel en URSS* (1962), a newsreel coverage of presidential visits to Senegal, and *Lamb* (1963), a documentary on wrestling, a popular sport in Senegal. Blaise Senghor also directed a short film, *Grand magal a Touba* (1962), a documentary on Islam in Senegal. Until the late 1960s when Ousmane Sembène appeared on the scene, Senegal did not give its nationals the chance to direct feature films or major documentaries. For instance, in 1960, Les Actualités Sénégalais hired Ives Ciampi, a Frenchman, to direct *Liberté I* (1960), a Franco-Senegalese feature production based on the conflict between tradition and modernity. The film was a major failure. Another Frenchman, Jean Claude Bonnardot, was also commissioned to direct a major documentary, *Senegal, ma piroque* (1962) (Diawara: 59).

To understand why Frenchmen were being commissioned to direct features and major documentaries whereas there were trained Senegalese directors like Paulin S. Vieyra and Blaise Senghor, one must take into cognisance the colonial mentality of the first generation of African leaders - most of whom are still in government or positions of authority in the continent - and who were products of the colonial school system that taught them that Africans were inferior beings. For this generation of leaders, among whom towered the philosopher-statesman and retired first president of Senegal, Léopold Sedar Senghor, expertise is not something that you acquire through training, rather it is the exclusive natural possession of the white ex-colonial master. In addition, one must also recollect the Laval decree promulgated during the colonial era in 1934 and the colonial mentality it imposed on the newly-independent Senegal - and indeed in other Francophone African countries whose independence are considered by France as nominal - and where French authority still reigns supreme.

Besides, *Les Actualités Sénégalais* was an affiliate of a French conglomerate, CAI. And just as *Les Actualités Sénégalais* depended on the CAI for the production of its newsreels, and on French directors for the making of features, so too does the *Service de Cinéma* depended on French facilities for production and post-production activities. When the *Service de Cinéma* was conceived to remedy the urgent need for documentaries and educational films, the project did not include the procurement of production facilities which would have in the long run saved Senegal a lot of money. As a result, the *Service de Cinéma* acted only as a bank through which individual ministries financed film projects meant to publicise the activities of their ministries. The *Service de Cinéma* therefore continued to depend upon France for the provision of filming equipment and post-production facilities. It was in its double role as a financier and an agent, that it co-produced with the *Bureau de Cinéma* of the French Ministry of Coopération and CAI, the films of Senegalese directors such as Sembène, Babakar Samb, Paulin S. Vieyra, Mahama Traore, etc. In essence, the emergence of Senegalese

cinema in the late sixties owed more to the patronage of France than to the availability of production facilities in Senegal.

In the early seventies, the Association des Cinéastes Senegalais began to rethink the role of the Service de Cinéma. This reassessment was however the result of an on-going general reassessment of African culture and tradition both inside and outside the continent after majority of African countries began to gain independence as from the early 1960s onwards. The general reassessment of African cinema was launched in the mid-sixties when radical filmmakers like Sembène and Med Hondo began consistently to attack the monopolistic practices of the Compagnie Africaine Cinématographique et Commerciale (COMACICO) and the Société d'Exploitation Cinématographique Africaine (SECMA) in the media. African filmmakers also argued the case of African cinema in international fora such as, the Colloque de Gene (1965), the Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres de Dakar (1966), and the Table-Ronde de Paris (1967). All these activities built up to the conception in Algiers (Algeria) 1969 of what was to become known as the Fédération Panafricaine des Cinéastes (FEPACI) or the Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers, later inaugurated at the 1970 Carthage film festival in Tunisia.

Having seen how the North Africans had well-defined policies of production, distribution and exhibition, the Association des Cinéastes Senegalais began to put pressure on the government to improve the conditions of film production in Senegal. In the end, what they won amounted to only cosmetic changes. The government created a new body, the Société Nationale de Cinéma (SNC) within the Ministry of Culture to oversee the sponsorship of Senegalese filmmakers. Filmmakers once again were asked to submit scripts - as was the tradition in the Bureau de Cinéma of the French Ministry of Coopération - on topics ranging from juvenile delinquency and urban problems to literacy campaigns. The best scripts were selected by a group of readers chosen by the president of SNC. In this manner, six feature films were produced and/or co-produced by the SNC in 1974. They included, *Xala* by Sembène, *Le bracelet de bronze* by Tidiane

Aw, *Baks* by Momar Thiam, *Njangaan* by Mahama Traore, *L'option* by Thierno Sow, and *Boram Xam Xam* by Maurice Dore, a French psychiatrist based in Senegal. The SNC also worked with the Association des Cinéastes Senegalais in the discovery and encouragement of young filmmakers. It was in this way that new and talented directors like Moussa Bathily, Ben Diogaye Beye, and Cheikh N'Gaido Ba, made their debut in filmmaking. Bathily, a former assistant director to Ousmane Sembène, has since become the master of the documentary form with such prize-winning films like *Tiyabu biru* (The Circumcision) (1978) and *Le certificat d'indigence* (1981), a documentary on hospitals and corruption in the medical profession in Dakar. Cheikh N'Gaido Ba now leads the Collectif l'Oeil Vert, a radical association of young filmmakers committed to the need for reformation within FEPACI organisational structures (Diawara: 60).

As I noted earlier, beside providing financial assistance to practising and aspiring filmmakers, the SNC did not embark on a policy of procurement of production facilities. In essence, the old order remained in place - Senegalese films continued to be processed, edited and sound-synchronised in studios in Paris. However, after the brief success of 1974, the SNC began to be plagued with serious problems, most of which can be traced to the government's discomfort with the critical tone of most of the films produced by the agency, but also because most of its films were commercial failures. Of all the films it produced in 1974 for instance, only three, *Xala*, *Le bracelet de bronze*, and *Njangaan*, were commercial success. Besides, the contents of *Xala*, an indictment of the impotence of Senegalese political leaders, and *Njangaan*, an indictment of Senegal's main religion, Islam, unsettled many in government and religious circles. Furthermore, apart from the fact that the SNC used government money to produce films which made political leaders uncomfortable, there also developed a conflict with another government agency, the Société d'Importation de Distribution et d'Exploitation Cinématographique (SIDEK).

While the SNC accused the SIDEK of not promoting and distributing its films, the SIDEK countered that the SNC was interfering with the distribution of films in the country. The conflict could easily have been avoided either by initially creating a single

body to handle both services or by merging both agencies when the problems cropped up and putting it under the control of a single ministry. Instead, the government created a situation in which the SNC was under the control of the Ministry of Culture and SIDEDEC at the Ministry of Commerce was charged with the importation and distribution of foreign films. In the end, to save itself the embarrassment of SNC sponsored films, the government dissolved SNC in 1976. After the dissolution of the SNC, recent government assistance to filmmakers has been restricted to guaranteeing bank-loans for directors. In addition, Actualités Sénégalais and Service de Cinéma have also resumed the production of short films and documentaries. Presently, film production has dropped immensely in Senegal as a result of the drop in state film sponsorship. Senegalese directors such as Safi Faye and Moussa Bathily are depending more and more on the French Ministry of Coopération and Swedish and German television stations to produce their films.

One other country which operates a sponsorship policy similar to that of Senegal is Cameroon. Cameroon has set up a body for film production called Fonds de Développement de l'Industrie Cinématographique (FODIC). FODIC derives most of its funds from tax revenues from film import and exhibition, and uses such funds to finance Cameroonian directors. However, FODIC, like its Senegalese counterpart, the SNC, was not intended to be a film corporation with its own production facilities. Rather, it is a funding agency for Cameroonian cinema. Before Cameroon set up FODIC, its pioneer filmmakers such as Jean-Paul N'Gassa, an IDHEC graduate, and Cameroon's best known directors, Daniel Kamwa and Jean-Pierre Dikongue-Pipa, enjoyed the sponsorship scheme of the Bureau de Cinéma of the French Ministry of Coopération. Daniel Kamwa's *Pousse Pousse* (1975) was a favourite film of Debrix. According to Bachy, over 700,000 spectators have seen *Pousse Pousse* (Bachy: 31).

Cameroon's next best known director, Jean-Pierre Dikongue-Pipa, gained international acknowledgement with his first major feature film *Muna Moto* (1975), produced by the Coopération and CAI. This film has won several international awards.

They include, the First Prize at the Festival International du Film de l'Ensemble Francophone (FIFEFF), held in Geneva in 1975, the Georges Sadoul's Prize in France, jointly awarded with Safi Faye's *Kaddu beykat* (1975) and Sidney Sokhana's *Nationalité immingrée* (1975), First Prize at the fifth Pan-African Film Festival in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso, and Second Prize at the Carthage Film Festival. In its present state, Cameroonian cinema, like those of most Francophone African countries, has existed only by the grace of French sponsorship. Production equipment and post-production activities are still carried out in Paris (Pfaff: 70-76, 185-192).

The next set of Francophone African countries with no production facilities, but internationally acknowledge directors, are countries such as Ivory Coast, Gabon, and Niger. These countries also have sponsorship schemes similar to those of Senegal and Cameroon. The only difference is that most of them acquired television facilities immediately after their independence, and film sponsorship in these countries is tied to the national television stations. For instance, unlike most other Francophone African countries which did not acquire television facilities until the mid-seventies, the Ivory Coast and Gabon had television facilities as early as 1963. A year after the establishment of Ivoirienne television, Timite Bassori, a graduate of IDHEC, directed *Sur la dune de la solitude* (On the Dune of Solitude) (1964), a recreation of the famous mermaid legends of West Africa. Most IDHEC trained directors like Henri Duparc and Desiré Ecaré, and Kramo-Lacine Fadika, trained at the Louis Lumière Film School, have also either worked for Ivoirienne television or the Société Ivoirienne de Cinéma (SIC) created in 1962. Before the creation of the SIC, Ivoirienne documentaries and educational films were produced by the CAI. On his return from Paris, Bassori was employed by the SIC where he directed half-hour length documentaries such as *Les Forestiers* (The Foresters) (1963), *L'Abidjan-Niger* (1963) on the Abidjan-Niger railway, *Amédée Pierre* (1963), etc. Bassori also collaborated with Claude Vermorel in the production of the film series for television, *Yao*, a pre-colonial adventure story of an African hero, Yao. He also worked with Christian Jaque during his direction of *Le*

Gentleman de Cocody (1966). Bassori's only full-length feature to date has been *La Femme au couteau* (The Woman with a Knife) (1968). In the seventies, he made a series of short documentaries based mainly on social commentaries on Ivoirienne society. They include, *Abidjan, perle des lagunes* (Abidjan, The Lagoon Pearl) (1971), *Bondoukou, an 11* (Bondoukou, year 11) (1971), *Ondienne, an 12* (Ondienne, year 12) (1972), *Kossou 1* (1972), *Kossou 2* (1974), and *Les Compagnons d'Akati* (The Akati Fellows) (1974) (Diawara: 62-67; Pfaff: 34-41).

Like Bassori, Henri Duparc, after his studies at IDHEC, was employed by the SIC. His first major feature film, *Mouna ou le rêve d'un artiste* (Mouna, Or An Artist's Dream) (1969), a low-budget film shot in ten days, was produced by the SIC. While working for the SIC, he also directed, as was the case with Bassori, several documentaries aimed at highlighting the economic and tourist potentials of Ivory Coast. They include, *Recolte du coton I* (Growing Cotton) (1968), *Recolte du coton II* (Growing Cotton, part II) (1968), *Achetez ivoirien* (Buy Ivorian Products) (1968), *Tam-tam ivoire* (Ivorian Drum) (1968), *Profil ivoirien* (1969), *J'ai dix ans* (I Am Ten Years Old) (1970) and *Carnet de Voyage* (A Traveller's Notes) (1969-70). His first full-length features include, *Abusuan* (1972), which depicts the problems of Africa's extended family system, and *L'Herbe sauvage* (Weeds) (1977), which deals with the anxieties of a housewife over her husband's infidelity (Pfaff: 88-93).

Desiré Ecaré started his directing career in Paris shortly after graduation from IDHEC in 1966. His debut effort, *Concerto pour un exilé* (Concerto for an Exile, 1968), was essentially a student low-budget production that used mostly non-professional black students resident in Paris, as actors, to act out their experiences of life in exile. The film also starred fellow Ivorian director, Henri Duparc, and Ecaré's Finnish wife, Marjietta, who was herself a graduate of IDHEC. The technical crew consisted of friends and the Bureau du Cinéma of the French Ministry of Coopération provided additional aid for the project. The film won a number of international awards at the Hyeres (France), Oberhausen (Germany), Carthage (Tunisia), Tashkent (USSR), and Cannes film festivals.

It also enjoyed television broadcasts in Germany and the Scandinavian countries, and featured at the San Francisco Film Festival (Pfaff: 95-103).

Ecaré's next film, *A nous deux, France* (For us both, France, 1970), depicts the artificiality of the so-called Francophone African "évolués" staying in Paris. It was produced by Les Films de la Lagune and Argos Films. It was premiered in Abidjan on June 16, 1970, during the course of a gala evening sponsored by the (SIC). Ecaré returned to Ivory Coast in 1972 and because of the limited opportunities in the cinema in Abidjan, he was employed as counsellor first, at the Ministry of Tourism, and subsequently, at the Ministry of Culture, where he examined the impact of the tourist industry on Ivory Coast's cultural heritage. His major feature since returning to Ivory Coast, *Visages de femme* (Faces of Women, 1985), depicts the changing conditions of women in the Ivory Coast. It was a major success and was selected as part of the films billed for the Critic's Week at the 1985 Cannes Film Festival, where it received the International Critic's Award, as well as the CITC Prize awarded by the International Council of Television and Cinema (Conceil International de la Television et du Cinéma).

Currently, Ivorian television plays a major role in the production of films by Ivorian directors. In 1963, a year after the inauguration of the (SIC), the Ivory Coast installed television facilities which included 16mm film laboratory and studio. Most of Bassori's documentaries were produced and broadcast on Ivorian television. In 1964, the Ivorian television produced George Keita's film, *Karogo*, a two-hour feature based on the myth of Queen Pocou, a legendary heroine who sacrificed her two sons to appease the gods. In 1979, after the SIC was abolished by the government for being commercially unviable, and for making little contribution to the training of filmmakers and technicians, a new agency - the Centre de Production des Actualités Audio-visuelles et du Perfectionnement Permanent (CPAAPP) - was created to make film production a subsidiary of Ivorian television. The CPAAPP is charged with the production of documentaries, serials and newsreels highlighting the activities of the various agencies of

government that need films to propagate their policies and programmes. The agency has facilities in 16mm, black and white production, and shooting equipment for 35mm.

One of the Ivorian filmmakers who has fully exploited the television facilities to produce his films is Gnoan M'bala. M'bala studied film production in Paris and Sweden, and upon his return home in 1970, chose to work for the television instead of the SIC, which had hitherto employed filmmakers like Bassori and Duparc. He proceeded to direct short fiction television films which according to Diawara, were well received in the Ivory Coast and by international film critics and historians. His narratives, which revolve mostly around comic and satiric situations, deal with cases of deception, mistaken identity and the general naïveté of people. They include *La biche* (1971) in which a black woman invites herself to the home of a mixed couple where she passes for the cousin of the husband, who is black, and becomes his mistress without the wife, who is white, knowing it. In another film, *Amenie* (1972), a peasant who moves to Abidjan fools people by passing for a wealthy diplomat. *Amenie* is considered M'bala's best work to date. His other films include, *Vasily* (1974), *Le chapeau* (1976), *Ablakon* (1983), etc (Diawara: 65-66; Bachy: 17-48).

Thus far, the film sponsorship and production structures of the liberal Francophone countries seem to be tied very much to French aid. In most of the countries such as Senegal, Niger, Cameroon, Togo, etc., where there are no production facilities, and the introduction of television broadcasting was a mid-seventies phenomenon, film production depended solely upon French aid in form of provision of financial of sponsorship, shooting equipment, technicians, and post-production facilities. Countries such as Senegal and Cameroon later set up production agencies like SNC and SIDEK (Senegal) and FODIC (Cameroon), where activities were restricted to financial sponsorship. They continued to depend upon France for shooting equipment and post-production facilities. Other countries such as Ivory Coast and Niger have shifted film production and sponsorship to their national television institutions. Nigérien television for instance, has produced Moustapha Alassane's *Kankamba* (1982), Mahamane

Babake's *Si les Cavaliers* (1982), Moustafa Diop's *Le medicine de Gafire* (1983), as well as co-produced Med Hondo's *Sarraounia* (1986). But even in Ivory Coast and Niger, post-production activities still have to be carried out in France, which also provides most of the shooting equipment and film technicians.

In the case of Burkina Faso, Mali and Guinea-Conakry, the situation is slightly different, probably because these countries have at one time or another revolted against French hegemony. Guinea broke ranks with the rest of the French colonies, became independent in 1958, and adopted a socialist political economy, to the consternation of France. Burkina Faso and Mali have also experimented with socialism at one time or the other. In the case of Burkina Faso, its change of name from Upper Volta in 1984, during the brief popular revolutionary government of Captain Thomas Sankara, is often considered as part of its efforts to defy French hegemony by looking beyond France, toward Eastern Europe, for its model of economic development.

When Burkina Faso became independent in 1960, the new government planned to build its own production facilities for 16mm film and a television station. To this end, in 1961, the Ministry of Information built studios that were supposed to become montage and sound-synchronising rooms. However, because the CAI was preparing in 1962 to sign contracts with most Francophone African countries in order to handle the production of their newsreels, Burkina Faso did not get the necessary co-operation from France which considered the Burkinabe facilities a duplication of CAI's in Paris. According to Bachy, in 1963, France helped Burkina Faso to build a television station "which only works three hours a day, four days a week, airing programmes provided by France. Only the news events are filmed in Upper Volta" (cited in Diawara: 73).

Post-Independence Burkina Faso also lacked trained directors. Unlike Senegal and Ivory Coast where indigenous directors, trained in the late fifties and early sixties, took charge of their national cinemas, in Burkina Faso, there was no one trained to

assume responsibility for the establishment of a national cinema. A French director, Serge Ricci, dominated the national production of newsreels, documentaries, and educational films, from 1960 to the early 1970s. Ricci made several 16mm medium length documentaries for the government of Upper Volta. They include, films on independence movements, *Fiere volta de nos aieux* (1961), on economics, *Espoir d'un nation* (1961), *Opération arachide* (1962) and *Culture atelée et fertilisation* (1964), on health education, *Les grands marigots magents les yeux* (1964), *Comment nourrir mon enfants* (1966), and three films on geography. Burkina Faso's first indigenous filmmaker, Sekou Ouedraogo, trained as a cinematographer under the guidance of Ricci. He later made two documentary films on regional fairs, *Foire regionales Voltaïques* in 1969 and 1970 respectively.

The most significant event in the history of Burkinabe cinema, and to a large extent that of most Francophone African countries' cinemas, is the nationalisation of film distribution and exhibition of the then Voltaïque government in 1970 and the creation of the Société Nationale d'Importation-Distribution (SONAVOCI), to control film distribution and exhibition which had hitherto been monopolised by the French distribution chairs of Compagnie Africaine Cinématographique Commerciale (COMACICO) and Société d'Exploitation Cinématographique Africaine (SECMA). This action was to have reverberating effects throughout Francophone African countries. That same year that the Voltaïque government took action, 1970, Mali followed suit with the nationalisation of its film distribution and exhibition through the creation of l'Office Cinématographique National du Mali (OCINAM). In 1974, Senegal and Benin got their own distribution companies, the Société d'Importation de Distribution et d'Exploitation Cinématographique (SIDECE) and the Office Beninois de Cinéma (OBECI) respectively. Madagascar followed suit in 1975 when it nationalised its film distribution and exhibition and created the Office du Cinéma Malgache. I shall examine the response of COMACICO and SECMA to this spate of nationalisation shortly. A

year after the creation of SONAVOCI, a Fonds de Développement du Cinéma Voltaïque was set up to promote national film production. Though SONAVOCI did not invest in production facilities, it financed the production of several shorts and full length feature films. Besides financing the documentaries of Serge Ricci between 1971 and 1973, in 1972, the Fonds de Développement du Cinéma Voltaïque financed the first indigenous feature film, *Le sang des parias*, directed by Djim Mamadou Kola. The seventies also witnessed the emergence of Burkinabe directors such as Hilaire Tiendrebeogo, director of the health education documentary, *Histoire de la tuberculose* (1973), Augustin R.T. Taoko, Gaston Kollo and Idrissa Ouedraogo.

In 1976, the government of Upper Volta created the Centre National du Cinéma (CNC) and appointed Gaston Kaboré, Burkinabé best known director, as head of the agency. The CNC has so far produced shorts such as Ouedraogo's *Yikyan* (1978) and Sanou Kollo's *Beglro Naba* (1979) and *Dodos* (1980). As head of the CNC, Kaboré assumed the role of principal government filmmaker, a role which had hitherto been played since the 1960s by Serge Ricci. In this capacity Kaboré directed a series of documentaries highlighting government programmes and enlightenment campaigns. They include, *Stockez et conservez les grains* (Stock and Keep Grains, 1978), *Regard sur le VIème FESPACO* (A Look at the Sixth FESPACO, 1979) and *Utilisation des énergies en milieu rural* (The Use of New Energies in Rural Environment, 1980). Kaboré first feature film, *Wend Kuuni, le don de Dieu* (Wend Kuuni, the Gift of God, 1982), set in precolonial Africa, deals with issues such as marriage and the concept of family, sex and love. According to Diawara, what is interesting about this film is that, "the manner in which the definition of these issues (themes) changes in the evolution of the narrative deconstructs the stereotypical view of precolonial Africa as a stagnating place or primitive paradise" (Diawara: 75). *Wend Kuuni*, released on September 1982 in Burkina Faso, has enjoyed both local and international acclaim. In Burkina Faso alone a total of 200,000 people viewed it upon its release, and this is in a country which has only fourteen movie theatres and a population of less than seven million. The film was also

shown simultaneously in three commercial movie theatres in Paris where it enjoyed widespread critical acclaim.

Though SONAVOCI, Fonds du Développement du Cinéma Voltaïque, and the Centre National du Cinéma (CNC), did not set up production facilities, a Burkinabe businessman, Martial Ouedraogo has, in appreciation of his country's international reputation as the official headquarters of the Pan-African Film Festival, FESPACO, invested more than \$300,000 in film equipment, including, 16mm and 35mm cameras, laboratories, editing tables, sound track facilities, props, etc. His production company, Société Africaine de Cinéma (CINAFRIC), is a profit venture set up to assist indigenous continental, and foreign filmmakers, filming in the continent. The wide range investment made by CINAFRIC in film equipment and studios has earned it the title, Hollywood on the Volta. Since it started business in 1981 CINAFRIC has produced two feature films, Sanou Kollo's *Paweogo* (1981) and *Les courages des autres* (1982) by Christian Richard, a French professor of film at the Institut Africain d'Education Cinématographique. Curiously enough, it would seem that the new film production company was denied patronage in its early days, as CNC financed films such as Gaston Kaboré's *Wend Kuuni* and Paul Zoumbara's *Les Jours de tourments* (1983) were sent to Paris for post-production finishing touches when the same facilities were available in Ouagadougou. CINAFRIC has since signed on several African directors, including Ousmane Sembéne.

In sum, the production policy and financial sponsorship of the cinema in Burkina Faso was certainly geared toward the creation of a self-reliant cinema with its own production facilities. Shortly after Independence, the country initiated plans to procure its own production facilities but the effort was frustrated by contractual obligations to the French production outfit, CAI. Despite this initial disappointment, Burkina Faso was the first Francophone African country, apart from Guinea-Conakry, to confront the monopolistic hold of the French film distribution and exhibition chains, COMACICO and SECMA which control Francophone African film distribution and exhibition. The

nationalisation of the Burkinabe subsidiaries of these multinationals in 1970 signalled the beginning of confrontations between COMACICO, SECMA and those countries dedicated to the development of self-reliant national cinemas. Though Burkina Faso could not establish its own production facilities because it lacked the technological ability and manpower to so independently of French support, the nationalisation of film distribution and exhibition made it possible for the country to secure enough funds to finance indigenous film production even though post-production work still had to be carried out in France.

The situation in Guinea-Conakry was quite different and much more complex. In response to the on-going Algerian liberation war and the growing demand for independence in sub-Saharan French colonies, General de Gaulle held a referendum of French colonies in September 1958, in which they were to be offered an option to stay French or become independent but in a loose association or alliance with France. Guinea was the only country that rejected either possibility and Sekou Touré declared Independence from France in October 1958. In response to Sekou Touré's action, de Gaulle pulled out French technicians and stopped all French aid to the country. To compound matters further, Touré decided to ally himself to the Eastern Block countries instead Western democracies (Martin, 1982: 57). As a result of this total break in relations with France, the country started very early to develop its own national cinema.

The newly-independent Guinea nationalised film distribution and exhibition, and created a state agency, Sily-Cinéma, the same year it became independent, to control film production, distribution, and exhibition in the country. Fearing that other Francophone African countries will follow Guinea's example, COMACICO and SECMA placed an embargo on supply of American and Western European films to Guinea, to serve as deterrence. As a temporary measure, the country turned to Eastern European countries for supply of films. However, since most Guineans are used to Hollywood and Western European films, Guinea had to make some concessions to COMACICO and SECMA. A compromise was worked out whereby the twenty-eight movie theatres in

the country were divided equally between Sily-Cinéma and the French multinationals. The arrangement allowed COMACICO and SECMA to run fourteen movie theatres in exchange for access to their films (Boughedir: 34-41; Diawara: 68-69).

As a result of French boycott of the country, Guinea could not enter into agreement with CAI as other Francophone African countries did shortly after their independence in 1960. Instead, with the help of such Eastern Block countries such as the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Poland, facilities in 16mm black-and-white film production were acquired by Guinea. With these facilities in place, the country was able to produce one newsreel every week in the early 1960s while the other countries that signed contracts with CAI were being supplied a newsreel per month because of the time it took the headquarters of CAI in Paris to complete post-production work and dispatch films back to Africa. Since Guinea, at this time, lacked trained indigenous directors, most of the early propaganda films produced by Sily-Cinéma between 1960 and 1966 were directed by foreigners. By 1966, however, six directors who were trained in the Soviet Union and the United States returned home to take charge of affairs in Sily-Cinéma. Bob Sow was made head of film distribution and exhibition while Mahames Lamine Akin head the production section of Sily-Cinéma.

Between 1966 and 1970, the majority of the films produced by Sily-Cinéma were documentaries, educational and propaganda films. This initial orientation is probably a product of the state's conception of cinema as an instrument for the dissemination of government policies and developmental programmes. The films were directed by indigenous directors such as Costa Diagne, Mahamed Lamine Akin, Gilbert Minot, Sékou Camara, Barry Sékou Omar and Moussa Kemoko Diakité. The films directed between 1966 and 1968 include Diagne's *Peau Noire* (1967), *Huit et vingt* (1967) and *Hier, aujourd'hui demain* (1968) which masterfully uses flashbacks and forwards to make allusions to Guinean past, present and future. The film won the Joris Ivens prize in 1968 at the Leipzig film festival. Other films of the period include Akin's *Le Sergeant*

Bakary Woulen (1966), *Mary Narken* (1966) and *Dans la vie des peuples, il a des instant* (1966), while Omar directed *Et vint la liberté* (1966) (Diawara: 71).

In the late sixties and early seventies, both Gilbert Minot and Moussa Kemoko Diakité dominated the documentary scene. Minot made *Le festival pan-africain d'Algers* (1968), on the Algerian film festival and several other short documentaries in the early seventies on presidential visits made by William Tolbert of Liberia, General Yakubu Gowon of Nigeria and Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau to Guinea. Diakité made *Rizi-culture dans le bogate* (1969), a documentary on agriculture, *L'université la campagne* (1975), on education, and a documentary on the funeral ceremony of Kwame Nkrumah who died in exile in Guinea in 1972. Sily-Cinéma also produced a series of didactic short fictional films during this period. They include Moussa Camara's *Ame Perdu* (1968); *Un amour radical* (1972) and *Un grand père dans le vent* (1973) co-directed by Moussa Camara and Alpha Adama. Since most of the films produced by Sily-Cinéma in the sixties and seventies were didactic and nationalistic, they were shown mostly in Guinean movie theatres and on its national television which was established in 1977.

In the early eighties however, Sily-Cinéma made international news when it co-produced *Amok* (1982) with Morocco, and produced *Naitou* by Diakité. *Amok*, a film based on the 1973 Soweto massacre, was directed by the Moroccan, Ben Barka, and starred the famous South African singer, Miriam Makeba. Guinean technicians using Sily-Cinéma equipment shot the film, and Dan Soko Camara who was assistant director to Ben Barka during the shooting of *Amok*, later went to direct his own film, *Ouloukoro* (1983). The next film that brought Sily-Cinéma international attention was Diakité's *Naitou*. The film is a musical about a young girl, Naitou, whose mother is killed by a jealous co-wife. After killing Naitou's mother, the co-wife, now Naitou's stepmother, mistreats her and prevents her from taking part in an initiation ceremony for girls of her age-grade. The stepmother is finally punished by an old lady who symbolises justice. The film's originality lies in the fact that it is narrated through dance and music by the Ballet

National de Guinée. It won the UNESCO prize at the Ouagadougou film festival in 1983 (Diawara: 72).

Despite attempts by Guinea to establish a national self-reliant cinema, the country's efforts have met little success. First, the placing of emphasis upon documentary and educational films meant that Guinean movie theatres continued to be dominated by Hollywood, European and Hong Kong films. Furthermore, though the country has 16mm production facilities, the rushes of Guinean films still had to be sent abroad for post-production processing because lack of proper maintenance has resulted in the breakdown of most equipment. Curiously too, the 35mm film laboratory which West Germany started installing since 1966 is still uncompleted today. Therefore, like most other Francophone African countries, attempts by Guinea to develop a self-reliant national cinema without the necessary industrial base to sustain such an industry has met with little success. Even attempts to nationalise the distribution and exhibition arm of the industry has witnessed little success due to the blackmailing and arm-twisting tactics of the French multinational distribution and exhibition chain, SOPACIA which replaced COMACICO and SECMA. With its powerful connections within the French political structure and strong international working agreements between SOPACIA's parent company, Union Général Cinématographique (UGC) and the American Motion Picture Export Company of America (AMPECA), no Francophone African country stands the chance of successfully confronting SOPACIA or building a national cinema without the necessary industrial base (Boughedir: 32-41).

6.4. The Effects of British and French Colonial Policies on Film Production in Anglophone and Francophone African Countries.

Britain and France had divergent film policies as part of the cultural package of their overall colonial policies both during and after the colonial era in their respective colonies in Africa. To a large extent, the film policies of each of the colonial powers, both during and after the colonial era, reflect the overall nature of the so-called policies of

"association" and "assimilation" adopted by Britain and France respectively toward their colonies. These policies, from the appraisal I have been giving thus far, account for much of the divergent film production organisations, policies and sponsorship currently noticeable in both Anglophone and Francophone African countries. Frank Ukadike has observed in respect of this development that

different patterns of film production within Anglophone and Francophone regions derive from the contrasting ideological pursuits of the colonial French and British governments. For example, while the French pursued a so-called assimilation policy, British involvement with its colonies was pragmatic business. Similarly, observers point out that while the French "gave" feature films to its colonies, the British "gave" theirs documentary. France seemed to adopt a cultural policy that encouraged production in the Francophone region, whereas the Anglophone region (where film production did not pass the economic priority test) resolved to cling to the British tradition of documentary filmmaking (Ukadike, 1991a:75).

There are three interrelated aspects to the question of the impact of British and French colonial policies on current production policies and outputs in both Anglophone and Francophone African countries. These are: the question of the policy of association versus assimilation; that of the often stated Anglophone African inheritance of documentary tradition versus Francophone African inheritance of feature film tradition; and the question of the post-colonial cultural policies of both colonial powers in Africa. In his assessments of these issues, Ukadike merely restates the unqualified assertions which had been made earlier by film historians and critics such as Angela Martin (1982: 30) and Manthia Diawara (1986: 63), that the policies of association and assimilation and the legacies of documentary and feature film practices left by the erstwhile colonial powers, explain the divergent nature of film practice in Anglophone and Francophone African countries. I shall be arguing on the contrary that this explanation is too simplistic as an account of why film production has progressed more in Francophone than in Anglophone African countries. I shall return to this point shortly.

The impact of the British colonial policy of association (indirect rule) and the French policy of assimilation on African cinema can only become clear if the policies themselves are fully explained and the impact of their agencies on African cinema accounted for. In his article "Indirect Rule - French and British Style", Michael Crowder

has fully explained the impact of both policies on African culture and traditional political institutions. For instance, he has observed with regards to the policy of association that the British believed that it was their task to conserve what was good in indigenous institutions and assist Africans to develop along their lines. Thus the relation between the British political officer and traditional rulers was in general that of an adviser who only in extreme circumstances interfered with the traditional ruler and the native authority under him. However, where the traditional ruler governed small political units, and in particular where their traditional executive authority was questionable, then the political officer found himself interfering in native authority affairs more frequently than ideally he should. In essence, in practice, the borderline between "advisory" and "supervisory" in the activities of the political officer was not always clear. Crowder further argues that though indirect rule depend primarily on a traditional ruler as executive, its aim was not to preserve the institutions of monarchies or chieftancies as such, but to encourage local self-government through indigenous political institutions, whether these were headed by the single authority of a king, by a council of elders or by an appointed chief (Crowder, 1978: 199). In his explanations of the differences in relation between British and French political officers and African traditional rulers, Crowder has observed that

the British system depended on the advisory relationship between the political officer and the native authority, usually a chief, [king or emir], leading a local government unit that corresponded to a pre-colonial political unit. The system placed the chief in an entirely subordinate role to the political officer. But it is important to stress that the chief in relation to the French political officer was a mere agent of the central colonial government with clearly defined duties and powers. He did not head a local government unit, nor did the area which he administered on behalf of government necessarily correspond to a pre-colonial political unit (Crowder: 200).

In the interest of conformity, the French divided up both the Federations of French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa administratively into cantons which frequently cut across pre-colonial boundaries. The *Chefs de Canton* did not remain traditional rulers of their old political units but of the new cantons, though sometimes the two coincided. Most importantly, the *Chefs de Canton* were not necessarily those who would have been

selected according to customary practice. More often than not, they were those who had shown loyalty to France or had obtained proper French education. In his assessment of the role of traditional African rulers in French colonial administrative set-up in Africa, Jean Suret-Canale has observed as follows:

a sense of ambiguity permeated their whole position. On the one hand, it was extolled as testimony of respect for "customs" and "African institutions"; on the other they were always being reminded that they existed only by the grace of the coloniser and were nothing but tools in his hand. A second contradiction concerned the chief's function: on the one hand, he was the representative, the executive, of administrative authority and, on the other, he was the representative of the African community, who recognised no other. He found himself between the hammer and the anvil. There was no statue or guarantee to protect him. He was simply mentioned in circulars which, in themselves, created no obligations until 1934 - 6 (Suret-Canale, 1964: 322).

The British on their part were scrupulous in their respect for customary methods of selection of traditional rulers. The difference between both countries' approach has much to do also with difference in national character and political traditions - while Britain operates a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, France has been a republic most of the time since the 1789 revolution. As Crowder puts it:

the administrator from republican France, particularly in the inter-war period, had little time for the notion of chiefs holding power other than that derived from the administration itself. This provides a marked contrast with the average British administrator, who believed sincerely that for Africans their own traditional methods of government were the most suitable, provided they were shorn of certain features that did not correspond to his sense of justice. Coming from a country which still maintained a monarchy ... The British officer respected his chief as separate but equal, though certainly not somebody with whom he could establish personal relations. It was the educated African before whom he felt uneasy. Indeed many political officers openly express their contempt for the 'savvy boy' or 'trouserred African' (Crowder: 206).

The definition of the term assimilation is quite problematic. M. O. Lewis, for instance, has drawn attention to the many definitions of assimilation in use. They include: (i) assimilation as the dominant colonial policy of France, i.e. its dominant and continuing characteristics; (ii) assimilation as the policy abandoned in favour of association; (iii) assimilation as opposed to autonomy, i.e. integration versus devolution; (iv) assimilation as a legalistic definition, i.e. representation in the mother of parliaments; (v) assimilation as civilisation; (vi) assimilation as representing racial equality as against British tendency

to the colour bar; (vii) assimilation as a highly centralised form of direct rule of colonies (cited in Crowder: 204).

It is of course difficult to choose any of these seven definitions of assimilation as the most satisfactory one; they all probably combine to give a wide ranging picture of the term. Besides, it must be noted that the policy of assimilation was only fully experimented in Senegal which was then politically assimilated to France through the representation of Senegal in the French *Chambre des Députés*, in Paris. As a result of this assimilation, a *Conseil Général* was created for Senegal, modelled on the *Conseil Département* of France. In addition, municipal councils were structured after the French model, and the policy included the personal assimilation of Senegalese in the communes by according them the status of French citizens, though they were allowed to retain their *Statut personnel*. This explains why the erstwhile president of Senegal, Léopold Sedar Senghor, served as a French deputy in Paris. The policy of assimilation in Senegal also included the extension of French educational facilities as part of the French *mission civilisatrice*.

When the French found out that the wholesale application of the policy of assimilation would be too expensive to operate, they opted for the Lugardian policy of *politique d'association*. But even after France adopted the policy of *politique d'association*, its overall outlook continued to be a much more moderated policy of assimilation rather than a carbon copy of the British policy of association. First, the goal of creating French citizens out of Africans was not totally abandoned; rather, it was now approached more pragmatically than before. Second, there remained in place a high degree of administrative centralisation which was not compatible with a true *politique d'association*. Third, the education curriculum continued to be modelled on the French system. Unlike the British who encourage the teaching of vernacular languages, especially in primary and infant classes, children in Francophone Africa were made to speak French right from the day they entered school. Fourth, due regard was not given to the individual character of a region; rather, the same administrative organisation was

imposed throughout French territories. As a result, French political officers were subjected to posting from one territory to another sometimes every other year. This gave them little opportunity to learn local languages or understand local customary practices. In contradistinction to the French practice, British political officers remained in the same territory for a long period of time and, in the case of Nigeria, in the same region; and promotion depended in part on the ability of the political officers to learn indigenous languages (Crowder: 205; Armes, 1987: 19-20).

The French of course encouraged the formation of a native *élite* which was absorbed into territorial and federal administrative services, although this was not carried out on a very large scale. But the general French attitude toward educated Africans was that, once you have gone through French tertiary education system, you were considered cultured enough to be accepted as a French citizen. As Lucy Mair puts it:

the assumption which governs the whole attitude of France towards native development is that the French civilisation is necessarily the best and need only be presented to the intelligent African for him to adopt it. Once he has done so, no avenue is to be closed to him. If he proves himself capable of assimilating French education, he may enter any profession, may arise to the dignity of Under-Secretary for the colonies, and will be received as an equal by French society. This attitude towards the educated natives arouses the bitter envy of his counterpart in neighbouring British colonies (cited in Crowder: 205).

The British, on the other hand, in the twenties and thirties actively discouraged the formulation of a class of Europeanised Africans, particularly at the level of the central colonial administration. It is difficult to say which of the two political policies was better. Both had profound positive as well as negative impact on African culture and tradition, and ultimately, both forms of acculturation helped to fashion contemporary African personality.

For instance, while the French policy of assimilation was less racist and accommodative towards African *élites*, it also promoted French culture at the expense of African. As a result, most Francophone African intellectuals were greatly alienated from African culture and tradition since the education curriculum of Francophone African

countries was structured, with little moderation, on the French model. Most Francophone African intellectuals experienced cultural re-awakening only after encountering racism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. The level of cultural alienation and re-awakening experienced by these intellectuals partly explains why it was Francophone African intellectuals that championed the Négritude Movement. Anglophone African intellectuals have traditionally been the greatest critics of Négritude because they were not as alienated as their Francophone African counterparts, from African culture and tradition. As a result, Anglophone African intellectuals were often baffled why anyone needed to propagate his or her culture and racial attributes. Most of them were often so assured of their African background - coming as they did from countries where the British did everything to preserve African culture and institutions - that they were often baffled when Francophone African intellectuals, in a moment of cultural re-awakening, began to valorise African culture and racial attributes (Soyinka, 1976: 126-139; Irele, 1981: 67-86; Appiah, 1992: 1-73). There is the need to take cognisance of the fact that France's *politique d'association* continued the cultural assimilation of African élites both during and after the colonial era, and that French sponsorship of Francophone African cinema is but just one aspect of France's overall neo-colonial policies towards its erstwhile colonies. In fact, it can be argued that France only recognises its erstwhile colonies in Africa as nominally-independent countries. France continues to treat the supposedly independent countries as de facto French provinces, and this treatment, I would guess, partly explains why French garrisons still abound in most Francophone African countries.

The British, on the other hand, were hostile to African élites during the colonial era even though they had set up schools and universities to train indigenous manpower, in anticipation of the inevitability of decolonisation. While helping to build up an African élite through education, the British paradoxically erected structures that barred Africans from enjoying the material benefits and social status of an élite class. Through the institution of the colour bar, African elites were barred not only from social clubs, they

were also denied equal status with their white colleagues at work places. This partly explains why nationalist movements sprang up earlier in Anglophone African countries than in Francophone Africa where the elite class was incorporated partially into the French national and colonial elite class. But with regards to African culture and tradition the British did everything to protect and preserve traditional African culture, institutions, ethics and values systems. British political officers were also made to learn the language and customary values of the ethnic group under their jurisdiction. Many of them undertook ethnographic studies, translated the Bible into local languages and folktales from local languages into English and this was well before linguistic studies became instituted as academic disciplines in the newly established universities in Anglophone Africa during the colonial era.

With regard to the phenomenal growth, both in quantity and quality, of Francophone African cinema - in comparison to its Anglophone African counterpart - it cannot be convincingly argued that France's colonial policy of assimilation, as practised during the colonial era, contributed in any way, to the current notable development of Francophone African cinema. While the policy of assimilation favoured the creation of a Europeanised African élite, it did not favour the development of a self-reliant Francophone African cinema because France, during the colonial era, did not pursue any consistent policy that potentially favoured such a development. The French agencies established to promote the development of Francophone African cinema - the Consortium Audio-visuel International (CAI) and the Bureau de Cinéma of the French Ministry of Coopération - were post-colonial creations. And even then, production facilities continued to revolve, like the French colonial policy of assimilation, around France. There was no attempt to decentralise the production facilities and activities of CAI which was charge with the production of newsreels and documentaries for the newly independent Francophone African countries. The African subsidiaries of CAI engaged only in photography; film processing, editing and sound commentaries were carried out in Paris. Most of the film technicians were also Frenchmen.

Unlike most Anglophone African countries that had film production facilities since the late forties and trained personnel to man them, and had acquired television broadcasting facilities in the 1960s, to complement the documentaries and instructional films exhibited through the Mobile Film Units (MFUs) in the rural areas, most Francophone African countries acquired television facilities only in the seventies, and without the added facilities of film production or the establishment of Mobile Film Units, the few movie theatres that there are, are in the urban centres. This situation could not be said to have helped to create an enduring film culture, during the colonial era, as was the case in Anglophone Africa where rural dwellers have been enjoying film shows since the late forties. The current Francophone African film culture is therefore a post-colonial development and it is mostly an urban phenomenon. It was unlike the case in Nigeria for instance, where smart businessmen who were quick to note the effectiveness of the Mobile Film Units (MFUs) later started using MFUs to exhibit Hollywood westerns, to promote the sale of consumer goods in the rural areas. This practice did not only lead to the proliferation of private businessmen operated MFUs, it also enabled rural dwellers to enjoy free cinema while being commercially induced to buy European manufactured goods.

With regard to the current notable development of Francophone African cinema, I should like to argue that it is only by taking cognisance of the fact that the French did not really abandon the policy of assimilation even after they adopted the *politique d'association*, both during and after the colonial era, and that over the years, the French have built a strong Franco-African alliance between French elites and their African counterparts, and that these alliances have even developed into political cells and cliques, that one can gain a better understanding of the reason why Francophone African cinema was/is sponsored by French government agencies. As I earlier observed, the sponsorship of Francophone African cinema is but one facet of the grand neo-colonial political strategy that entrenches France as both the political/military protector of its

erstwhile colonies, and French multinational corporations as the major controllers of the Francophone African consumer market.

The French financial and technical sponsorship of Francophone African cinema is therefore tied to both the politics and policies of the political party in power in France and the political/ideological preferences of its ruling cliques or cells in Francophone African countries. For instance, the temporary suspension of French aid to Francophone African filmmakers in 1979, was tied to the fact that by this time, there was a major shift in emphasis from preoccupation with themes of colonial rule and exploitation, to focusing attention upon the failures of the post-colonial state and the post-colonial rulers. This shift in thematic emphasis invariably brought into full focus, the corruption, greed, nepotism, ethnicism and gross administrative inefficiency of the emergent political class.

With films such as Sembène's *Borom Saret* (1963), *Mandabi* (1968), *Xala* (1974), and Souleymane Cissé's *Baara* (1978) and *Finye* (1982), focusing attention on the growth of both urban and rural poverty, and tracing this poverty and social degeneration to the corruption and administrative ineptitude of post-colonial rulers and governments, various Francophone African governments started worrying about the social impact of films with strong political undertones. When Francophone African governments applied pressures on the Giscard government, it suspended aid to Francophone African filmmakers in 1979 in order to maintain the special friendly relations between Francophone African leaders and the French government. Aid was resumed only in 1980 at the onset of the Mitterrand socialist government, signifying an ideological shift in Franco-African political relations, in favour of progressive filmmakers such as Sembène, Hondo, Cissé, etc.

The second argument often advanced for the notable development of film production in Francophone African, in comparison to its Anglophone counterparts, is the rather simplistic argument that the French left its erstwhile colonies a heritage of feature film production while the British left theirs a documentary and instructional film

production tradition. As I earlier argued, this is not true because the French involvement with the development of Francophone African cinema is a post-colonial phenomenon; and even at that, France did not establish film production infrastructures in its erstwhile colonies. French sponsorship of Francophone African cinema takes the form of provision of money to finance film production, film equipment and technicians to work with filmmakers, and the provision of post-production facilities in Paris for film processing, editing, sound-synchronisation and film promotion. It is these services that account for the notably high quality of Francophone African films, in comparison to those from Anglophone Africa, not inherited forms of film production. Furthermore, it is not true either that Francophone African filmmakers have specialised in feature film production while their counterparts from Anglophone Africa have specialised in documentary and instructional film production. Many Francophone African filmmakers such as Pauline S. Vieyra, Soulaymane Cissé, Moussa Bathily, Timite Bassori, Henri Duparc, etc., also have acclaimed documentary and instructional film practices to their credit. It is therefore not correct to suggest that Francophone African filmmakers inherited a tradition of feature film production from France and that this is why they have produced the best quality of African films available in international film circuits.

The question to ask at this juncture is whether other African countries, the Anglophone countries included, produce films at all. If they do, the next question will be why they are not available in international film circuits; why it is that only films from Francophone African countries continue to dominate international film circuits, as representatives of African cinema. The answers to these rhetorical questions will be that, indeed, films are produced in other African countries, including Anglophone African countries, but that filmmakers from these countries do not enjoy state sponsorship of film production, nor do they enjoy the financial and technical backing of a post-colonial power like France whose patronage include the promotion of Francophone African films in Paris, from where they enjoy privileged entrance into the international film circuit thereby perpetuating the myth that only Francophone African countries produce good

quality films. It costs money to travel to international film festivals to promote one's film(s). And in the absence of any financial backing either of the sort France makes available to Francophone African filmmakers or national sponsorship by Anglophone African governments, there is no way one can ascertain whether good quality films are produced in Anglophone African countries or even other African countries for that matter or not.

It is not true either that Anglophone African filmmakers have specialised in documentary and instructional film production. Filmmakers such as Ola Balogun, Adamu Halilu, Eddie Ugbomah, Ade Folayan, Oyewole Olowomoroje, Wole Soyinka, etc., of Nigeria, have all directed films of comparable quality to some of the internationally widely acclaimed films from Francophone African countries. Balogun's *Black Goddess* (1978) and *Money Power* (1982) have also won international film prizes. Nigeria is also the home of the first truly indigenous cinema, currently referred to as Folklore Cinema because of its outgrowth from Yoruba Travelling Theatre. Folklore Cinema or what I prefer to call New Nigerian Cinema, is a truly indigenous cinema with its own crude form of star-system and production companies which uses mostly an all Nigerian production staff and production facilities within the country. The closest correlatives of New Nigerian Cinema, in the context of the broad category of the Third World Cinema, would be the invariably now much more established Hindi Indian Cinema, Hong Kong (Kung fu) Cinema. Indeed, one of the main criticisms of the New Nigerian Cinema is its predilection for borrowing from Hindi, Hong Kong (Kung fu), Hollywood and European cinematic practices, in its bid to survive as an emergent national cinema.

The free borrowing spirit of New Nigerian Cinema has not yet been extended fully to adaptations or even reproductions of Hollywood releases, possibly because of the technological and narrative sophistication of these films. At present however, simple Hollywood techniques like chase sequences and narrative suspense built around plot and atmospheric/mood music are already freely adopted in New Nigerian Cinema. Beside

this obvious commercial bias, the cinema is also financially self-reliant because its production capital was derived from savings from the various families' travelling theatre companies that have metamorphosed into film production companies. One of its other survivalist features is that most of the companies assist each other when major film projects are in execution. But presently, the life-styles of producers and directors - the film "stars" eat their fame for the time being - are already betraying the financial success of the New Nigerian Cinema. I should like to add too that though the New Nigerian Cinema is predominantly Yoruba-derived, like its theatre progenitor, its audience range extends beyond the Yoruba-speaking states of Nigeria. Its mode of exhibition has - in addition to the established movie theatres - been itinerant like its travelling theatre days when shows were presented in school halls, churches, town halls, or any secure and enclosed space or compound.

Apart from the fledgling New Nigerian Cinema, Ghanaian directors such as Sam Aryetey, Kwate Nee-Owoo, King Ampaw and Kwaw Ansah have also made feature films of notable quality. For instance, Ansah's film, *Love Brewed in the African Pot* won the Oumarou Ganda Prize at the Seventh Pan-African Film Festival at Ouagadougou, and it was a commercial success in Kenya, Zambia and Sierra Leone, beside Ghana. Indeed, it was one of the most widely seen African films within the continent so far. In view of all the overwhelming fact of the complex and multifarious nature of African cinema, it is not only wrong but simplistic to suggest - as Martin (1982: 30), Diawara, 1986: 63) and Cham (1987: 13) have - that Francophone African cinema is much more developed than its Anglophone counterpart. It is equally wrong and simplistic too, to suggest, as these critics sometimes do, that Francophone African filmmakers have produced more internationally acclaimed feature films because they inherited feature film production culture from France while their counterparts from Anglophone Africa have specialised in documentary and instructional films because they inherited these forms from the British. While conceding the latter case - that Anglophone African countries inherited production infrastructure and documentary and instructional film practice from

the British - these facts alone do not account for the nature of the current production patterns in the countries concerned nor is it true that there is generic imbalance with regards to the forms in question.

I have argued on the contrary that Francophone African cinema's current domineering representation of the continent in international film circuits is as a result of two interrelated factors: the post-colonial technical, financial and promotional sponsorship of France, and the financial sponsorship of filmmakers' projects by the various national governments. Both forms of sponsorship - with the possible exception of Guinea-Conakry and Burkina Faso - have often neglected the setting up of production facilities in Africa, to promote the growth of national cinemas. In the case of France, the sponsorship policy is a continuation of the country's grand neo-colonial strategy that aims to preserve and secure France's hegemonic geo-political, military, economic and cultural influence in its erstwhile colonies so that its consumer markets are firmly secured for French multinational corporations.

Britain, on the other hand, stopped all forms of technical and financial sponsorship of African cinema in the mid-fifties, even before most of its colonies were granted independence. In keeping with its colonial policy of association, Britain also granted its colonies independence and physically left Africa, content to use the enormous economic clout of its multinational corporations, and historically established links with powerful traditional rulers and Sandhurst trained military officers to control the governments of its erstwhile colonies, protect its interest and influence policies without being physically present. Besides, Britain does not operate a policy of state sponsorship of the cinema like France. Thus while Francophone African countries have contented themselves with depending on French production facilities and technical support, Anglophone African countries, lacking such support by a post-colonial power, have had to embark upon the procurement of production facilities and mass training of indigenous personnel to manage them. As a result, most film productions in Anglophone African countries are handled by trained indigenous technicians. In most Francophone

African countries, French technicians are still in charge of cinematography, film development and processing, editing, and other technical related activities. But having set up these production facilities, Anglophone African governments refused to grant direct financial aid to their filmmakers. Most of them consider commercial cinema productions as a realm of private business investments and are content to render commercial services to filmmakers who wish to use the national production facilities, film equipment and technicians. It is a purely business affair. For this reason, most filmmakers have had to hire film equipment from private sources or from the national film corporations in addition to securing the services of either private, national film corporations or television cinematographers and technicians if the production company does not have its trained technical and cinematographic staff.

In addition to securing the services of technical and cinematographic staff, the production companies have had to secure funding, in the form of bank loans, personal savings or financial assistance from family sources or friends, for their projects. These financial constraints for instance, explain why in Nigeria, only New Nigerian Cinema with its savings from its travelling theatre companies days has a fledgling prolific and self-reliant practice. Other directors working outside this structure suffer a lot of financial constraints. Ironically, it is in the area of direct financial aid to filmmakers - however irregular it has been - that Francophone African governments have surpassed their Anglophone counterparts. These factors of course have direct bearing upon the production output of filmmakers from both Anglophone and Francophone African countries.

I have also argued that Francophone African filmmakers have not inherited a feature film production culture from France and that France's sponsorship of African cinema is a post-colonial phenomenon. Furthermore, that Francophone African filmmakers have accomplished documentary film practice in addition to feature practice just as their Anglophone counterparts have accomplished feature film practice in addition to the inherited legacy of the Grierson School of documentary practice

established through the British Colonial Film Units. I have equally argued for the need to acknowledge the impact of the colonial Mobile Film Units in establishing a popular film culture in Anglophone Africa as well as the impact being made in Nigeria by its currently predominantly Yoruba-derived fledgling New Nigerian Cinema. Though this cinema is Yoruba derived, like its theatre progenitor, its audience extends beyond the Yoruba speaking states of Nigeria. Its mode of exhibition has, in addition to the established movie theatres, been itinerant like its travelling theatre days when shows were presented in school halls, town halls, churches, or any secured and enclosed space or compound. Finally, I have examined the impact of both the colonial and post-colonial administrative and film policies of Britain and France, and the consequences of these policies on current film production outputs of Anglophone and Francophone African countries.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

POST-COLONIAL AFRICAN HISTORICAL TEXTS AND COLONIALIST COUNTER-DISOURSE IN AFRICAN CINEMA.

7.1. Introduction.

In this chapter, I shall be examining the historical background to the response of Africa cinema to colonialism and colonialist African cinema/discourse. This shall be followed by analysis of how African filmmakers represented Africans and their European colonisers in films set in the colonial era. The main argument I shall be pursuing in this chapter is that though post-colonial African historical texts respond to the whole colonial enterprise in their narratives, they are inspired, first and foremost, by the desire to refute the images of Africa and Africans identifiable with the discursive tradition of colonialist African cinema/discourse. In this regard, they present a version of history and historical events which is counter-discursive in nature. From the distinctions which I have made between colonial African instructional cinema and colonialist African cinema, it shall become clear in my analysis of the post-colonial African historical texts set in the colonial era that they are inspired counter-discursive responses more to the latter tradition than the former.

Coincidentally, the first generation of African filmmakers whose films I shall be analysing, grew up under colonial authority. Their version of historical events is therefore sometimes informed either by direct personal experience, through information derived from those directly affected by the events recounted, news media and government documented sources, or through the sheer experience of generally growing up under colonial authority. Ousmane Sembène, for instance, fought in the Second World War and the events he recounts in *Camp de Thiaroye* bear the resonance of personal experience. To round off this chapter, I shall be analysing Med Hondo's *Sarraounia* (1987), and Ousmane Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow's *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988).

7.2. The Historical Background of Post-colonial African Historical Texts.

For purely historical reasons the foundation of early African scholarship has, in general, been built upon the tradition of colonialist counter-discourse. The reason for this is not far fetched. Africa has been subjected to two waves of European colonialism - the first which occurred during the Roman Empire covered much of North Africa, and the second which began in the fifteenth century was accompanied by the slave trade. In both cases, colonialism had made it possible for the production of a body of knowledge about Africa coloured by European authority and awareness of its social position on the continent, a body of knowledge which moreover, reflecting this uneven Afro-European relations, defined Africans as inferior beings and their customary practices as perversions of European ideals.

The first generation of Africans to acquire western education - or people of African descent with such education who settled in the continent after the abolition of the slave trade - were the first set of people to encounter this body of knowledge. It was they too who initiated works which they intended to correct the negative image of Africa and Africans which they encountered in the process of acquiring western education. In Africa, the tradition of colonialist counter-discourse was initiated by scholars of African descent such as Alexander Crummell, Edward Wilmot Blyden and W. E. B. Du Bois, all of whom settled and naturalised in Africa. According to Kwame A. Appiah,

at the heart of Crummell's vision is a single guiding concept: race. Crummell's 'Africa' is the motherland of the Negro race and his right to act in it, to speak for it, to plot for its future, derived - in his conception - from the fact that he too was a Negro. More than this, Crummell held that there was a common destiny for the people of Africa - by which we are always to understand the black people - not because they had a common historical experience or faced a common threat from imperial Europe, but because they belong to this one race. . . Crummell was one of the first people to speak as a Negro in Africa: and his writings effectively inaugurated the discourse of Pan-Africanism (Appiah, 1992: 5).

Though Crummell's works were written in response to European nineteenth century racist theories, he had to invoke concepts of race in order to theorise the oneness of people of African descent, a process which involved the inversion of racist theories but

which Appiah qualifies as racist because of its dependence upon biological concepts of race. The only exception Appiah ascribes to Crummell's works is that Crummell did not conceive of race as a basis for the institution of racial discrimination or inflicting harm but as a general term of racial solidarity among people of African descent (Appiah: 25). The same trend of thought also informed the works of Edward Blyden. Blyden, in his work, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race* argues that

there is not a single mental or moral deficiency now existing among Africans - not a single practice now indulged in by them - to which we cannot find a parallel in the past history of Europe, and even after the people had been brought under the influence of a nominal Christianity. . . The Negro of the ordinary traveller or missionary - and perhaps, of two-thirds of the Christian world - is a purely fictitious being, constructed out of the traditions of slave-traders and slave-holders, who have circulated all sorts of absurd stories, and also out of prejudices inherited from ancestors, who were taught to regard the Negro as a legitimate object of traffic (Blyden, 1888: 58).

V. Y. Mudimbe in his study of the works of Blyden drew conclusions similar to those which Appiah drew in respect of Alexander Crummell. Mudimbe argues that Blyden rejected in his works European nineteenth century racist theories according to which Africans represented the starting point in man's evolutionary process while Europeans represented the highest point of evolution. As Mudimbe puts it, Blyden's

political ideology arose from a response to racism and to some of the consequences of imperialism. It represents an emotional response to the European process of denigrating Africa and an opposition to the exploitation that resulted from the expansionism of Europe from the fifteenth century. At the same time, in order to prove its own significance, his ideology strongly asserts the thesis of pluralism in the historical development of races, ethnic groups, and nationalities. Consequently, Blyden can reject the evolutionary assumption of "identical but unequal races" which provides grounds for the theme of the "white man's mission" and thus justifies imperialism and colonisation. In its place, he put a different assertion: "distinct but equal" (Mudimbe, 1988: 132).

It is instructive to note also that these scholars wrote their works in the midst of the ongoing European colonisation of Africa. In this respect, their works were a protestation against both the ongoing colonial enterprise and its intellectual product, colonialist African discourse. Therefore, their works not only laid the foundation of both Pan-Africanism and the intellectual practice of colonialist counter-discourse but also anticipated the political and cultural nationalism that preceded the struggle for

independence in most African countries. Subsequent generations of black scholars and statesmen such as Joseph Casely-Hayford, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, Cheikh Anta Diop, Wole Soyinka, etc., later built upon this intellectual tradition in their own individual ways. For instance, it is now common knowledge that both the concepts of African personality and its Francophone correspondence, *Négritude*, owe their roots to the broader concept of Pan-Africanism as defined by Crummell, Blyden and Du Bois (Irele, 1981: 89-116). According to Nouredine Ghali,

the concept of "negritude" was developed by a group of French-speaking black intellectuals studying in Paris in the 1930s and 1940s, among them was Leopold Senghor, later to be first president of Senegal after the close of formal colonial rule. It denoted a view of black people as peculiarly gifted in the art of immediate living of sensual experience, of physical skill and process, all of which belonged to them by birthright. It was an attempt at the time to combat the racist view of African civilisation as a null quantity, and the ideology that French colonial rule was providing otherwise worthless, culture-less beings with the opportunity to assimilate themselves to French culture, and thus take on a cultural dignity otherwise unavailable to them (Ghali, 1987: 52).

Anglophone African intellectuals have traditionally vigorously criticised the *négritudinist* notion that the European contribution to global culture is technological and rational while that of Africa is governed by intuitiveness, emotionality and sensuality (Soyinka, 1976: 126-139). But as Irele has demonstrated in his analysis of the concept of African personality, *Négritude*, is a version of the concept of African personality - albeit both concepts are articulated differently by black intellectuals of the Anglophone and Francophone linguistic divide, both owe their origins to the broader concept of Pan-Africanism as articulated by the first generation of black scholars in the diaspora. As Irele puts it:

Négritude is a version, a distinctive current of the same cultural nationalism expressed in different ways among black people and at various times in their reaction against white domination. *Négritude* is, in a word, the Francophone equivalent, of the term 'African personality' in its original meaning as used by Blyden and in its association with the Pan-Africanism of Sylvester Williams and W. E. B. Du Bois . . . The two concepts thus stand in a reciprocal relationship as being, each in its own way, a formulation of vision of the race founded upon an idea of Africa (Irele: 91).

Apart from the fields of philosophy, history and social theory, the other field where the tradition of colonialist counter-discourse has been firmly established is that of African literature. Emmanuel Obiechina, in his examination of the initial creative impulse underlying the practice of early modern African literature has argued that it can be linked to the desire to correct negative images of Africa and Africans which African writers encountered in European literature. As he puts it:

the position, stated bluntly, is this: foreign writer on West Africa express in their writing prejudices and preconceptions which distort their picture of West African life. *Sometimes the writer is aware of these distorting elements and boldly works them into the technique and texture of his narrative*; in other circumstances they may operate on him as an unconscious projection of his reaction to something strange and disturbing. In either case, the result is different from the view of West African life held by West African writers who see it from the inside . . . This is why novels by foreigners are a factor operating on the indigenous writer and impelling him, consciously or unconsciously, to counter through his own writing the outsiders' view (my emphasis) (Obiechina, 1975: 17-18).

Chinua Achebe's critical and creative responses to colonialist African literature in general, and Joyce Cary's *Mister Johnson* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in particular, is now a famous instance of colonialist counter-discursive responses in African literature (Achebe, 1988: 1-3). Obiechina's study, however, acknowledges the fact that colonial African literature written by Europeans was not a unified discourse. While he cites the works of European authors such as Joyce Cary, Joseph Conrad, Graham Greene, Elspeth Huxley, etc., as belonging to the tradition of colonialist African literature, he nevertheless singles out the works of Margaret Field, especially *Stormy Dawn*, written within the same period, as an exception to that tradition (Obiechina: 24-25). Though Obiechina does not treat in detail the relation of power and authority to the institution of colonialist African literature, there is an implicit acknowledgement of this fact in his argument that some European writers are aware of the intrusion of the distorting elements of prejudices and preconceptions into their works but *boldly* work them nonetheless into the technique and texture of their narratives. Of course, though early modern African literature responded to colonialist African literature, African

writers have since graduated from both critical and creative responses of the early phase of their works to pre-occupation with the post-colonial state and society.

Similar colonialist counter-discursive trends such as those that I have cited, I should like to argue, are also noticeable in the cinematic practices of the first generation of African filmmakers. Products of this initial creative responses to colonialist African cinema/discourse can be found in works such as Ousmane Sembène's *La Noire de* (Black Girl, 1966), *Emitai* (1971), *Ceddo* (1976), Ousmane Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow's *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988), Med Hondo's *Soleil O* (1969), *West Indies* (1979), and *Sarrounia* (1987), Ola Balogun's *Black Goddess* (1978), and *Cry Freedom* (1981), Eddie Ugbomah's *The Mask* (1976), Adamu Halilu's *Shehu Umar* (1976), Kwaw Ansah's *Heritage Africa* (1988) etc. Though these filmmakers have since moved on to concentrate upon post-colonial themes, the colonialist counter-discursive phase of their works recalls earlier historical works by black scholars and literary writers in response to the existing canon in Euro-America scholarship and filmic practice of colonialist African discourse/cinema. The question of how successful such colonialist counter-discursive practices are, is a matter, of course, open to disputations and one which is not central to this study. What is of interest to me in this chapter, is the version of history and historical events put forward by African filmmakers vis-à-vis other discursive traditions referenced in the colonial period, and the relevance of this to the nature of the representation of subjectivity, both African and European, ethnicity class, gender, etc., in historical colonial encounter texts. The point I should like to stress, however, is that since these historical colonial encounter films present an African version of historical events, the spectatorial textual positioning of the African viewer differs markedly in respect of the colonialist African texts to which they respond. Writing on the subject of the spectatorial positioning in post-colonial African films of the historical colonial encounter genre, Manthia Diawara has argued that

these films position the spectators to identify with African people's resistance against European colonialism and imperialist drives. These stories are about colonial encounters and they often pit African heroes and heroines against European villains. They are conditioned by the desire to

show African heroism where European history only mentioned the actions of the conquerors; resistance where colonial version of history silenced oppositional voices; and the role of women in the armed struggle. For the filmmakers, such historical narratives are justified by the need to bring out of the shadow the role played by the African people in the shaping of their own history (Diawara, 1989: 116).

In the remaining part of this chapter, I shall be analysing the selected texts, Med Hondo's *Sarrounia* (1987), and Ousmane Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow's *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988).

7.3. Background Notes On Med Hondo.

Abid Mohamed Medoun Hondo, better known as Med Hondo, is the son of a Senegalese father and a Mauritanian mother. He was born on May 4, 1936, in Ain Ouled Beni Mathar, in the Atar region of Mauritania where his fore-fathers were taken slaves by the Tuareg, a desert dwelling nomadic ethnic group of Arab ancestry who live around oases in the Sahara desert. In 1954, Med Hondo was sent to Rabat, Morocco, where he trained for four years as a cook at a hotel management school. He later travelled to France at the end of his training in search of a job in 1959. For a while he was unable to find a job related to his training due to racism in French society, and like most black migrant workers of his time, he had to earn a living by working as a dock-worker and a farmhand before he eventually got a job in a Marseille restaurant. His boss who was ashamed of hiring a black chef, confined him to the back of his kitchen until he noticed that Hondo's chef's cap was providing an exotic air to his restaurant. He later worked in a restaurant in Vittel, a thermal health resort in eastern France, before moving on to Paris in 1962 where he worked for a while as a Swiss cheese delivery man before he was employed as a waiter at the posh La Rein Pédaque restaurant.

In 1965, out of his desire for self-expression, he began to take drama courses under the late Françoise Rosay, a well-known French stage and screen actress. On completion of his training as an actor, the limited range of roles available to him as a black actor soon made him disillusioned with the idea of taking up a professional acting

career in mainstream French theatre. In an interview which he granted Françoise Pfaff in 1976, he states that

I became involved in drama because I felt a need to express myself and because I had a great deal of naïveté. As I saw actors on the stage, they reminded me of the griots and the palaver trees under which African people debated their problems. I thought that by way of the theatre I could tell what I had been enduring and what I felt. My assumptions were proved to be wrong. While studying drama I had to learn parts from plays by Molière, Racine and Shakespeare. They did not illustrate the experience I had sought to express. Moreover, there were few parts Black actors could play on the French stage. Classical theatre did not answer my needs (Pfaff, 1988: 158).

In 1966, he founded a black repertory theatre known as Shango, named after the Yoruba god of Thunder, in order to explore the themes of black diasporan experience in France. His theatre company was comprised of Africans and African diasporan actors and actresses, especially those from the United States and the French West Indies. The troupe undertook a tour of France with plays by the Martinican poet and playwright Aimé Césaire, African-American authors such as Imamu Baraka (Leroi Jones) and many by African and South American playwrights. They played in small theatres and cultural centres but the public showed little interest in their productions. He later merged his troupe with Les Griots, a theatre company headed by the Guadeloupean actor and director, Robert Liensol. The new company became known as Griot-Shango, and it continued to produce works by black authors such as René Depestre (Haiti), Guy Monga (Congo) and Daniel Boukman (Martinique). Med Hondo made his entrance into film by working as an actor and assistant director in various productions. Among the films he acted in are: *Un Homme de trop* (Shock Troops, Costa-Gavras, 1967); *Tante Zinta* (Robert Enrico, 1968), and *A Walk with Love and Death* (John Huston, 1969).

Med Hondo made his debut as a filmmaker with two black and white shorts, *Balade aux sources* (Ballad to the springs, 1969) and *Partout ou Peut-être nulle part* (Everywhere, or May be Nowhere, 1969). He gained international recognition as a filmmaker with his first full length feature, *Soleil O* (O Sun, 1969). *Soleil O* is a black and white film made over a period of five years on a low budget of \$125,000. The film owes its title to an old song that African slaves used to sing on their way to the West

Indies. The film's main protagonist is an anonymous African accountant, a symbolisation of black migrant workers in France, whose experience of racism drive him to the edge of mental breakdown. The film uses a series of narrative flashbacks and a trance scene towards the end of the film, to relate the experiences of black migrant workers in France to French colonialism in Africa, and the role of world revolutionary figures such as Patrice Lumumba, Che Guevara, Mehdi Ben Barka and Malcolm X, in containing the spread of imperialism in the world. Two years after *Soleil O*, Hondo made his first colour features, *Les Bicots-nègres vos voisins* (Arabs and Niggers, Your Neighbour, 1973). Like *Soleil O*, the film deals with the routine experiences of Black and Arab workers in France. Between 1974 and 1978, Med Hondo spent several months with the Saharouis and in the course of those months made two full length colour documentaries about the Polisario struggle for independence in Western Sahara. These films are: *Nous aurons toute la mort pour dormir* (We 'll have all the Time we're Dead to Sleep, 1977) and *Polisario un Peuple en armes* (Polisario, A People in Arms, 1979).

The documentaries on the Polisario movement was followed by another feature film, *West Indies, Les nègres marrons de la liberté* (West Indies, the Black Freedom Fighters, 1979). The film is based on *Les Négriers* (The Slavers), a play by Daniel Boukman which Hondo had produced thrice on stage. By African standards, *West Indies* was a big budget film since its production cost reached \$1.3 million, including a set comprising a slave ship built by set designer Jacques Saulnier costing \$200,000. To finance the project, Hondo raised a substantial part of the money from investors in Senegal, Mauritania and Ivory Coast after refusing a \$1.5 million offer from MGM because they wanted him to use noted Black American actors instead of a lesser known Caribbean cast. He also sought and received technical support from Algerian television as well as obtaining \$85,000 from the French National Cinema Centre (CNC). In the end, with both professional and amateur actors, seventy dancers, most of whom were Caribbean performers, ballets choreographed by the Black American choreographer,

Linda Dingwall, and a musical score composed by the Martinican composer, Frank Valmont, Hondo made what may be considered Africa's first musical on film.

When *West Indies* was released in 1979, it was shown simultaneously in eight Gaumont movie theatres in Paris where it proved to be a commercial failure. The film has however fared very well in the festival circuits where it has won a lot of awards. *West Indies* chronicles black experience from the slave trade to the present day neo-colonialism, through a symbolic representation by way of the slave ship of French imperialism in both Africa and the West Indies. His next major project after *West Indies* was another historical film, *Sarraounia*, a \$2.5 million feature film based on Abdoulaye Mamani's text, *Sarraounia*, which was itself a literary transcription and documentation of the oral Azna epic of Sarraounia, a warrior queen who in the late nineteenth century resisted French colonialism in the present day Niger Republic. Med Hondo like Ousmane Sembène, considers himself to be a *committed filmmaker*, a term used to affirm their commitment to the production of works that would explicate the historical circumstances surrounding present day black experience both on the continent and in the black diaspora (Pfaff, 1986; Ranvaud, 1987; Reid, 1986).

7.4. A Critical Reading of Med Hondo's *Sarraounia*.

The events recounted in *Sarraounia* are based on what actually occurred in the Hausa country of what is today the Dongondoutchi district of Niger Republic. By this I mean that both Mamani's work and the film itself do not contradict, in broad terms, the actual historical account from which they draw inspiration. Ousmane Tadina, who has carried out a thorough study of both the French account of the events and those recounted by Abdoulaye Mamani in *Sarraounia*, states that

Mamani's work does not contradict the historical accounts from which it draws inspiration, but it should not be confused with history, which remains a scientific discipline that proposes to discover the truth, to attain a certain level of objectivity. Thus, *Sarraounia* is essentially a product of the literary imagination, not an historical or ethnographic document (Tandina, 1993: 29).

Tandina's account of the broad narrative thrust of Mamani's text is not deviated from in the film; as noted earlier, he co-wrote the screen version with Med Hondo. In the historical account itself, on January 2, 1899, a French colonial expeditionary force made up of black mercenary soldiers, and commanded by Captain Voulet and Lieutenant Chanoine, as second in command, set off from Segou, in present day Mali, to occupy Zinder, a town in present the day Niger Republic, where the Sultan of Zinder ordered the execution of a young French captain leading an expeditionary force to Chad. The Voulet-Chanoine expedition column crossed the country of the Zarma and that of the Gourma before entering into the Dallal Mawri, a large valley - over what is now considered to contain a large underground stream - of thick forest vegetation outlying Lugu, the seat of the Azna Kingdom. On April 17, 1899, the French expeditionary force laid siege to the village of Lugu where they encountered a fierce resistance from the Aznas led by their warrior-queen, Sarraounia. Of course, the French, through superiority of arms, eventually succeeded in occupying her palace, but instead of surrendering, Sarraounia withdrew into the forest around Lugu and embarked upon guerrilla and psychological warfare that wore down the morale of the French expeditionary force, especially that of the *tirailleurs* who were terror-struck by the name of Sarraounia and her famed sorcery and fetishes. In the end, Voulet and Chanoine were forced to withdraw from Lugu after a mutiny by the *tirailleurs*.

According to Michael Crowder, the Voulet-Chanoine expedition force was bedevilled from the start by troubles because they permitted pillaging and cruelties on a scale that exceeded anything yet witnessed in the French colonial conquest in West Africa. Reports of the cruelties themselves were taken to France by Lieutenant Peteau, a member of the expeditionary force who was sent back by Voulet because of disagreement between the two. As a result of the report by Peteau, the French authorities sent Lieutenant-Colonel Klobb to take over command from Voulet, who assassinated him. The death of Klobb led to another mutiny by the *tirailleurs* who placed themselves under the authority of Lieutenant Pallier, the next most senior officer.

When Voulet tried to assert his command over the *tirailleurs*, they murdered both him and Chanoine. The many crimes committed by the Voulet-Chanoine expeditionary column included, in addition to murdering their superior officer: sacking the town of Sansanne Haoussa, already under French control; taking the inhabitants of captured villages as "captifs"; killing twenty-five women and a number of children as an example to the population of a village which had wounded some *tirailleurs*; requesting soldiers to bring hands cut off corpses as proof of the fact that they killed the enemy; sacking of Birni Nikoni, a town of 10,000 people, many of whom, women and children, were massacred, etc. (Crowder, 1968: 106-114). Many of these crimes are replicated in the film, *Sarraounia*.

Tandina, in his analysis of Mamani's text, has correctly argued that it can be classified alongside other African epics dealing with the theme of leadership, communal resistance and heroism like, D. T. Niana's *Soundjata* and Thomas Mfolo's *Chaka*, all of which deal with the theme of resistance by African traditional rulers to the incursion of European colonial forces into their Kingdoms. Most of the stories of colonial resistance by these leaders were first documented through praise-songs by court historical raconteurs, the griots, before they were translated by their present authors. In this respect, the question of authorship of these texts is often quite problematic since they were handed down through generations of griots. With regards to the general question of the definition of African epic, Tandina has noted that

although it remains difficult to define the African epic with precision, we can say that it resolves around a battle, a political event of major importance, a confrontation between noblemen. It is a song of glory. Created after the fact by specialists, it can be either sung or recited. The hero is idealised and even his faults are transformed into virtues. In endowing the hero with superhuman qualities, the performer introduces incredible details not only to embellish the story, but also to add lustre to the hero's reputation. In fact their victories and their death reflect the intervention of outside forces as much as (if not more than) the effects of their own physical and mental powers (Tandina: 24).

The portrayal of the main protagonist, Sarraounia, in the film, meets the characteristics that Tandina has described in respect of characterisation in the epic genre of African

literature. The film itself can be classified as belonging to the epic genre in African cinema. Other films which fit such a classification are Adamu Halilu's *Shehu Umar* (1977) and *Kanta Kebbi* (1978), both of which deal with epic stories and exploits, incorporating elements of colonial resistance, by traditional rulers in Nigeria. Sarraounia is of noble birth and her ascension to throne of the Azna Kingdom displayed all the noble qualities identifiable with the genre. But as in the idealised characterisation of the literary epic, Sarraounia, in the film version, is also very much an idealised heroine. I will explore this point further in some detail when I deal with the question of the representation of character-subjectivity in the film. Suffice to note for now that though the film pays detailed attention to the crimes of the Voulet-Chanoine force, its central narrative point of view is the celebration of the warrior-queen, Sarraounia, and the noble resistance which she led against French colonialism in the late nineteenth century.

By African standards, *Sarraounia*, like Hondo's earlier features, was a big budget film. Its production costs amounted to \$2.5 million and its large cast included, apart from the lead roles, some 800 extras. The film was shot on location in Burkina-Faso over a period of twelve weeks and was produced by Hondo's production company, Films Soleil O, in conjunction with the Ministry of Information and Culture of Burkina Faso and the French Ministry of Culture and External Cooperation. Its large cast and production staff was drawn from several Francophone African countries, including Niger, Burkina-Faso, Cameroun, Benin, Gabon and Mauritania.

Sarraounia is a very complex film and in term of its narrative structure, it switches its narrative codes both backward and forward, through time and space, as it tries to articulate the events culminating in the European colonisation of Africa. It begins with a prologue showing the march of the Voulet-Chanoine colonial expeditionary force into the savannah grassland, and ends with an epilogue depicting Sarraounia giving a long speech on religious and ethnic tolerance, and the need to fight to preserve one's freedom, a speech which is appropriately crowned by her praise-song rendered by a company of her griots, who also implicitly acknowledge the contributions

of both old and modern griots, i.e., filmmakers, to the preservation of African history. The prologue prefaces a narrative flashback sequence which deals with the childhood of Sarraounia. The childhood sequence takes us into the secrets behind Sarraounia's famed reputation in warfare and sorcery. She was brought up by a maternal fetish doctor/warrior uncle who not only taught her both traditional medicine and the art of warfare but also instilled in her, at a very young and impressionable age, a sense of her extraordinary infancy, not having been nurtured as an infant by a woman's milk but that of a mare due to her mother's death after her birth. The uncle also made her aware of her social status as the future Queen of the Aznas, destined to be lord over both men and women. This was her past story. Her present story as the crowned Queen of the Aznas begins with her victory over an invading army of Fulani jihadists of Sokoto. After this victory, she marries her general, Baka (Ben Idriss Traore). The marriage ceremony itself is not shown; however, the marriage was short-lived because of her peculiar upbringing and Baka's pride, which could not stand the praise-songs of her griots.

With Baka's desertion, the narrative switches back to the story of the partition of Africa. The story of partition is narrated through a combination of a voice-over narration of the events surrounding the partition and a symbolic partition represented through a sculptured map of the continent superimposed on a flame which cracks up into individual countries with blood issuing out of the forcibly created boundaries. This symbolic representation graphically recounts the bloody tale behind the partition of Africa and the actual colonialism which attended it. This symbolic sequence ends with a cut to a full frontal view of the Voulet-Chanoine force. When the narrative switches back to Sarraounia, we find her in a restless worried mood. She has heard of the destruction, looting and rape in the wake of the invading army but rather than surrender without resistance and be subjected to the attendant atrocities of the army or collude with them as others are doing, she prepares her subjects for resistance. In the meantime, Sarraounia's Islamised neighbouring kingdoms debate among themselves whether they should assist her or allow the French to destroy the "witch" and "infidel". The Sultan of

Sokoto, which is under British authority, goes beyond sitting on the fence. When he learns of the impending French attack, he promptly dispatches an envoy (Hama Gourounga) to Captain Voulet (Jean-Roger Milo) to guide him to Sarraounia (Ai Keita), as a way of punishing her for refusing to convert to Islam with her subjects. The envoy is however detained by Captain Voulet who suspects him of being a British spy.

When the French High Command in Niger learns of the impending attack, they dispatch a letter through a Corporal to Voulet, who not only ignores his superiors' letter but also executes the messenger as a spy. He subsequently declares himself independent of the French authorities and sets himself a personal target of building an empire to enrich himself and the *tirailleurs*, whom he coerces to join him, with an additional sweetening promise of share in all loots. Receiving no reply to their first letter, the French authorities next dispatch Colonel Klobb (Jean Edmond) to take over the Voulet-Chanoine force. In the meantime, in a cut to the palace, we find preparations being made to defend Lugu. Back at Voulet's camp, the French officers attend a formal dinner where they brag about bestial exploits such as tying a black woman down on a table for a horse to have sexual intercourse with and comparing the gentleness of Oriental women in bed to the roughness of "nigger women".

While the French officers dine and wine and gaily brag about their exploits, their mercenary soldiers, in a contrastive montage, are in a sad mood, singing a dirge in anticipation of their impending death. The dinner party itself is cut short midway by a thunder storm that strikes terror into the black mercenaries, who reason that Sarraounia sent the N'Komo after them. Consequently, many flee out of fright, while their slave-captives seize the opportunity of the storm to desert to Sarraounia. Those caught fleeing are made to flog themselves the following day as a warning against future desertion. The Prince of Matankari, a neighbouring *emirate* whose father colludes with the invading army by quartering them, deserts his father and switches allegiance, with his followers, to Sarraounia. Sarraounia's ex-husband and general, Baka, learns of the impending attack and rallies to her support. When the forces finally join battle, Voulet's men are

beaten back twice before they succeed in occupying the palace after bombarding it with a cannon. As the defensive walls around Lugu are torn down, the defenders withdraw into the outlying forest, adopting a scorched earth policy as they go.

Voulet successfully occupies Sarraounia's palace and earns his loot, but the Queen herself proves an intractable mirage encountered only momentarily in unceasing waves of guerrilla attacks. With her tactics and psychological warfare, Sarraounia gradually wears down the soldiers, who become terror-stricken and thoroughly demoralised. Voulet and his officers themselves become so over-excited in their response to the terror-stricken soldiers who are taunted by an elusive vision of Sarraounia, that between them and the soldiers, it is almost impossible to distinguish the sane from the insane. In the end, seeing that Voulet will never withdraw for reasons of prestige, the soldiers are forced into mutiny and he has to withdraw from Lugu. But as they withdraw in broken and disorganised columns after burning down the remaining houses, the French officers take vengeance on the *tirailleurs* by murdering their wounded colleagues along the way. When Klobb eventually catches up with Voulet, the latter assassinates him. In the mutiny which follows, Voulet and his aide, Coulibaly (Tidjani Ovedraogo), are killed by the *tirailleurs*; and in the general pandemonium which follows, Chanoine (Feodor Atkine) is stabbed from behind by a group of women. Lieutenant Joalland (Roger Mirmont) then takes over command of the forces. The film ends with Sarraounia's speech on religious and ethnic tolerance - some of the causes of political friction in post-colonial African societies - and the need to fight to preserve one's freedom and independence. The speech is immediately followed by a praise-song in honour of Sarraounia which also acknowledges the role of griots in the preservation of African history.

It is clear from the narrative that there has not been too much deviation from the historical accounts. All the crimes detailed in the historical reports are accounted for before the encounter between the Voulet-Chanoine force and Sarraounia. The only noticeable change is that effected to the ranks of the French officers: Lieutenant-Colonel

Klobb is now Colonel Klobb and Lieutenant Chanoine is now Captain Chanoine. Also in the historical accounts Lieutenant Pallier takes the over command of the forces after the death of Voulet and Chanoine, while in the film, it is Lieutenant Joalland who takes over the command. Apart from these little alterations which do not alter the course of the events, there is great fidelity to the historical accounts.

Sarraounia explores a lot of themes, many of them dealing with the nature of conflicts both within Africa and between the competing European powers during the period of colonial conquests. They include the themes of honour and courage on the part of those who chose the path of resistance, and collaboration and cowardice, on the part of those who chose to collude with the invading forces. Other equally important themes explored include the theme of ethnic division and indecision within Africa during the period of colonial conquest and that of rivalry among the colonial powers, specifically British and French. Within these thematic divides, *Sarraounia*, of course, represents the forces of colonial resistance, but to her, we can add other courageous figures such as her general, Baka, the Prince of Matankari and her subjects. On the other hand, we can count among the collaborators the Sultan of Sokoto (Sekou Tall), the *Serkin* Arewa (Djibril Sidibe) and Amenokal (Rajoun Tapsirou), the leader of the Awellimiden Tuareg. Of course, each of them has varying reasons for collaborating beyond the problem of ethnic rivalry. For the Sultan of Sokoto, it is for religious reasons. He considers *Sarraounia* an affront to his ambition of building an Islamic theocratic state. The case of the *Serkin* Gobir (Baba Traore) was one more of political indecision than religious fervour while *Serkin* Arewa collaborated out of pure cowardice. Amenokal's case is purely economic. He considers *Sarraounia* a hindrance to his slave raids into black Africa.

One of the sequences which explores the theme of honour and courage is that which deals with *Sarraounia*'s exhortation speech to her fighters before the first battle with the Voulet-Chanoine force. What is significant about this speech is not so much the way it is represented in terms of narration: it is shot in a straight anti-clockwise moving

tracking shot, without diegetic audience commentaries upon her speech, without interruptions in form of break in speech or cut aways for reaction shots, and ends in a pan away from her, at the end of her speech, to her ex-husband and general, Baka, arriving at the scene, but in verbal discourse; in its exploration of theme of honour and courage. This 360° shot is almost unheard of in Western cinema. It breaks not only the 180° rule but does so twice. The shot roots Sarraounia's speech in its rightful place, and puts her differently in place, in contrast to the lateral tracking that is used for the French. I shall paraphrase the speech and comment upon it because it carries a lot of cultural significance related to African culture. The speech begins with Sarraounia telling her subjects that they are fighting for the honour and dignity of the Azna people, that she gave them the pride of being Aznas, and that even though she has not borne an heir to the throne, she will leave them a name which is equally valuable and long lasting. She also tells them that the Fulanis die to go to heaven but they (the Aznas) choose to die to leave a respectable name, and further, that they who die without a good name die forever, but that when they die for the preservation of their honour, their musicians and their children, i.e. the griots, will preserve their names through praise-songs. She concludes by telling them that they choose to fight to uphold their dignity and leave a good name, that they are fighting those who want to dominate and humiliate them.

What is being emphasised in this speech, beyond the question of honour and patriotism, is the very high premium which Africans place on names, especially family names, and the need to reproduce to ensure the continuation of one's lineage. In Africa societies, even in modern times, people who have engaged in anti-social activities likely to soil their family names have been known to be publicly disclaimed by such families in order to preserve the honour and dignity of the family name. The same goes for cowards who refuse to fight for the preservation of the freedom and independence of their communities. They are often scarred for life and the lineage of such people is branded through ceremonial satirical songs. The same goes for families noted for thievery or the infidelity of their women. No respectable family wants to be linked in marriage to such

publicly disgraced families. In spite of the growth of philistinism in modern African societies, the average African family still lives by this social norm. Also, even though corruption is rife in post-colonial African societies, there are many people in public services who will never partake in it for the sake of the honour of the family name. As a result of this strong attachment to names, careful choices are made when choosing names for children since the names not only carry significant meaning but Africans believe that people live-out the meaning of their names. I will explore further the significance of names when I examine elements of symbolism as reflected through the naming of African characters in the film. With respect to Sarraounia's speech, the honour at stake is not only the name of the ruling house but that of the entire ethnic group. I should like to add too that there are certain ethnic groups within Africa noted for their cowardice. Thus through her exhortation speech, Sarraounia not only affirms the dignity of her crown and ethnic group but also takes satirical swipes at the religious fanaticism of the Fulani jihadists who place a foreign religion above the dictates of patriotism. The question of the sanctity of family names is also reflected elsewhere in the film, in the conflict between the Prince of Matankari and his father, *Serkin* Arewa. When the Prince, who is the crown-prince of Arewa, is cursed and disinherited by his father over the former's decision to join forces with Sarraounia irrespective of differences in faith, the prince being a Moslem, his passing remark is: "Good, none of us would ever want your disgraced throne!", a reference to the father's cowardice which the prince considers has soiled the name of the ruling house of Arewa.

The theme of ethnic rivalries and divisions, reflected at the level of relations between traditional rulers and courts is also played out within individual kingdoms. This can be witnessed in the scene of the debate in the court of *Serkin* Gobir, where the issue of assistance to the besieged Sarraounia is tabled. The scene opens with the *Serkin* tabling before his traditional council news of the atrocities of the invading army. He specifically informs the council that whole cities have been destroyed by the army, that women have been taken by force to satisfy their lust, and finally, that silos full of grains

have been plundered. From the way he presents the information, one can deduce that he is trying to elicit a response favourable to offering help to Sarraounia. However, in the debates which follow we find that what we are faced with is a divided house, with the division reflecting the larger division in Africa as a whole between those forces in favour of resistance as against those supporting collaboration or neutrality. The debate of course ends in stalemate. In terms of narrative structure, the forces of resistance and neutrality are arraigned against each other on screen right and left respectively. The opinions in each camp are articulated by leading figures within the kingdom. The debate itself is narrativised along the structure of dialogue scenes, in shot/reverse shots. However, the forces in favour of resistance seem to have longer lines to deliver and this make their argument much more forceful than those of the opposing camp. As in most other scenes of similar structure in the film - e.g. the conflict between the Prince of Matankari and his father, *Serkin* Arewa - the strength of the arguments of the two opposing camps pitched against each other lie more in the power and quality of verbal discourse than in the manner of their spatial articulation. Most of the leading speakers are shot in medium close-ups with rapid cuts which do not permit character accessibility. There are no cut aways to approving or disapproving commentaries in the background.

This scene is also significant in other respects. Apart from dealing with the issue of intra-ethnic divisions, it is also the only scene within the film which fully explores the structure of traditional African public discourse. For instance, when the king is informing the council about the atrocities of the invading army, there are a lot of commentaries and exclamations going on the background. This accurately reflects the nature of most traditional African public discourse. Important public speeches are often punctuated with approving or disapproving commentaries or plain exclamations, depending on the nature of speech or occasion. For instance, not every public speech is similarly punctuated in this film. Speeches which need punctuations are those structured around the rhetoric of public debates. This explains why those by Sarraounia are not similarly punctuated. The scene at the *Serkin* Gobir's court is one such occasion which

requires punctuations through public commentaries. Though in this instance, the *Serkin's* indecision is also reflected in his inability to take a firm stand at the end of the debate. Thus apart from exploring internal divisions within various kingdoms, the scene also deals with the manner in which traditional African public affairs are conducted. The debate in this scene therefore recalls similar ones such as that of the scene of the village council meeting in *Daybreak in Udi*, the public debate among the *tirailleurs* that preceded the hostage scenes in *Camp de Thieroye*, and the ones that preceded the *tirailleurs'* mutinies in *Sarraounia*.

Other themes dealt with in respect of the European colonial conquest in Africa, are those which explore the cruelties and crimes of the entire enterprise, specifically that of the French as exemplified by the Voulet-Chanoine expedition force, and the theme of rivalry among the competing European powers, i.e. that between the British and the French. A series of images vividly captures the cruelties and atrocities of the Voulet-Chanoine force. The first is recorded in the ruins of an already plundered village littered with corpses. This scene is also a record of the first encounters between the troops and the people of the region. The image I am referring to is that captured by a long leftward tracking shot, showing corpses amidst the burning debris, that rests momentarily on a lone child nestling its dead mother. This image, in all its vividness, graphically states that not even nursing mothers are spared by the troops. Another series of images is captured in the sequence dealing with the village whose traditional ruler pleads to be spared destruction by welcoming the invading force with gifts and an offer of quartering. In the mayhem which follows after Voulet and Chanoine interpret the traditional ruler's reception as a smoke-screen for treachery and pride, almost the entire village population is wiped out. But the images with lasting effects recorded in the sequence are those of Voulet smiling approvingly as a captured woman is being raped by his soldiers, and the image of captured men of the village, buried up to their necks, being beheaded by horse-riding soldiers in what looks like a macabre polo sport. This series of images together with those of mutilated corpses hung on trees, (especially that with an old-man

mumbling away absent-mindedly beneath his hung relatives), images which vividly recall those blacks hanging from trees in the old South of the United States, and the habit of requesting the severed palms of war victims, as evidence of having killed the enemy, graphically capture the atrocities of the Voulet-Chanoine force.

The theme of British/French rivalry during the period of colonial conquest in Africa is explored in the scene showing the arrival of the Sultan of Sokoto's envoy at Voulet's camp. The Sultan, out of personal disdain for Sarraounia's refusal to convert to Islam with her subjects, has sent the envoy to lead the Voulet-Chanoine force to Lugu, the seat of Sarraounia's kingdom, as punishment. But Voulet, wary and suspicious of the offer of assistance from a British subject, concludes that the envoy is a British spy and orders his execution. Only the timely intervention of his aide, Coulbaly, spares the man's life.

Apart from recounting the crimes of the Voulet-Chanoine expedition force, and eulogising the resistance of Sarraounia and the Aznas, the film is also significant with respect to representing the nature of colonial conquest in Africa. We know, for instance, from the composition of the Voulet-Chanoine force that the army which conquered Africa was made up of African mercenary soldiers who were enlisted through a promise of share in colonial loot. In fact, from the composition of the force, one can reconstruct the entire history of post-colonial modern African armies, by tracing their present mercenary mentality, reflected in their corruption and lack of respect for democratic institutions, to the psychological make-up of its colonial precursors. Decades after independence, many of these armies are still constrained by the mercenary ethics that underlie their constitution. They now rule over their various countries like conquistadors presiding over their conquests.

Sarraounia contains much symbolism and imagery, most of which helps to locate and authenticate the work as a product referenced in the religio-cultural milieu of traditional pre-colonial African societies. These symbolic elements are reflected both in the naming of African characters in the film and in the connotations which each name

carry. Others are realised in the imagery invoked through figurative speech. For instance, most of the African names effectively help to locate the locale of action within the ambience of traditional Niger society, specifically among the Azna people. Thus names like Dawa, Baka, Gogue, Boka, etc. carry significant meaning in Hausa, the dominant language of the region. For example, Tandina has noted that

in Hausa, *dawa* refers to the bush. When applied to a person, it signifies "master of the bush" and is often accompanied by the title "Mai." Baka means "bow" in Hausa; in *Sarraounia* [the literary text] it designates the leader of the warriors. Gogu   is a stringed instrument; in Mamani's text, it becomes the name of the person who plays a stringed instrument. Boka is the equivalent of "sorcerer". Such names thrust us into the midst of Azna society. They tell us about the various professions and how these professions are organized. A particular person is in charge of each kind of activity. Some of the names (e.g., Dawa and Boka) also inform us about another important dimension of Azna society - religion, which is defined as a "religion of earth and nature." The person in charge of the earth, the Mai Dawa, has the task of dominating and taming nature (Tandina: 29).

In the film, we find that Dawa, Sarraounia's uncle, is a master fetish doctor who knows the secrets of various herbs and cure for various ailments, but he is also a retired warrior fully knowledgeable in war tactics which he teaches Sarraounia. Baka in the film is an army general, a symbolic play-out of the connotation of his name which literally means warrior. The Mai Gogu   (Abdoulaye Cisse) of the film is an accomplished poet-musician and court historian, a member of the griot caste. Boka, on the other hand, is the court fetish doctor. He is the one whom Sarraounia consults to seek the protection of the ancestors. All these not only designate professional origin but also mastery of one's profession.

Apart from characterisation, a lot of symbolic elements are also invoked in the film through figurative speech, especially that of Sarraounia. Most of these symbols are trade-mark invocations of traditional African public discourse. The masters of this highly stylised form of speech are the griots, from whom other strata of society learn the art of public orature. For instance, in the exhortation speech which Sarraounia gives in her palace, as preparations are being made for its defence, she refers to the invaders as "white locusts", a signification of plague by a swarm of insects. Their mercenary soldiers and collaborators are referred to as "wretched cringing dogs", again a signification of

domestication and blind obedience. In literal terms, the soldiers are characterised as plain ignoramuses lured by promises of loot and lust for women. In general, while negative symbols are used to characterise the nature of the invading force and its collaborators figuratively, positive ones are applied in the characterisation of Azna cultural symbols. For instance, the totem of the Azna kingdom is the panther, an animal which symbolises agility and power. When this image is linked with the warrior caste, the panther image signifies pride and skill, and when applied to Sarraounia, it connotes royalty, skill, and bravery. The image of the panther is invoked through Gogue's song:

I love you because you are my lover at night.
 I fear you because you are the greatest sorceress.
 I respect you because you are my queen.
 I adore you because you are my lord.
 I praise you because you are the strongest.
 You are the eye and the honour of the Azna.
 Sweet Sarraounia with talons of steel.
 You break your enemies as surely as
 The panther breaks the bones of his prey . . .

This eulogy does not mean that Gogu   is addressing Sarraounia as a lover as James Leahy seems to suggest when he notes that "After the victory celebrations, her general and former lover, Baka quits her service, jealous of the *griot* (poet/musician) who now loves her", in his review of the film (Leahy, 1988: 8). Rather the lyrics of the praise-song are paying homage to the multiple roles of Sarraounia as potential mother, great-sorcerer, queen and lord of the Aznas, who also is capable of being tough, swift and destructive toward her enemy-prey like a panther is notorious of. Images of benevolence and malevolence are used interchangeably in the lyrics. Baka deserts Sarraounia because as a proud warrior, he cannot bear the daily bombardment of praise-songs in honour of his wife. I should like to add too that pride and arrogance are trade-marks of the warrior caste in Africa. They are natural born soldiers who later graduate into building their own kingdoms. When Baka deserts Sarraounia, he goes to do just that. He returns later on in the film to help defend Sarraounia because Lugu is his ancestral home and he is still after all the general of the Aznas. Even if his kingdom were fully independent of Sarraounia's

authority, he would still owe allegiance to his ancestral roots and still be obliged to defend it. Symbolism and imagery are therefore used in the film as additional figurative element of characterisation. They help to create a binary framework which designates the invaders and their collaborators as evil and destructive, and Sarraounia as brave and courageous.

Beside symbolism and figurative speech, which are used to authenticate and historicise the text as a product of a particular age, African religious practices and belief-systems are also foregrounded in the text. Of particular interest in this regard are the role of witchcraft, sorcery, and ancestral worship in African belief-systems. These are societies of rain-makers who are thought to be capable of invoking thunder on their enemies as part of psychological warfare. These fetish doctors are also thought to be capable of directing thunder-bolts to their enemies in the privacy of their rooms. It is the awareness that Sarraounia possesses this knowledge that breaks the morale of the *tirailleurs*. They reason that the N'Komo woman is capable of delivering elemental forces of destruction at them whenever she pleases. Being a product of such a belief-system helps to reinforce a psychological frame of mind, predisposed towards actualisation of the suggested effects. In fact, psychological warfare is Sarraounia's major weapon for defeating the invading army. Once the backbone of the force made up of predominantly African mercenary soldiers is broken, the French are forced into retreat. The significance placed on ancestral worship is also highlighted in Sarraounia's invocation of the name, Dogua, the name of the ancestral head of the Aznas, for protection. For instance, during the evacuation of the palace, even though Sarraounia's personal belongings are left behind, the camera momentarily captures items of ancestral worship being carried away into safety under the watchful guidance of the elders of the kingdom. The application of psychological warfare in *Sarraounia* climaxes in the incidents leading to the withdrawal of the troops from Lugu. Most of these incidents are extremely hilarious in the manner in which they set up the French officers for ridicule, beside offering momentary comic relief to the unfolding tragic events in the text.

The first of these incidents occur in the sequence where attempts by one of the French officers to defile an object of ancestral worship, as part of his attempts to demystify the effects of N'Komo on the *tirailleurs*, backfire. The sequence begins with the officer, leading a group of soldiers, busts upon the ancestral shrine of the kingdom. On seeing an ancestral mask hanging by the doorway, the soldiers begin to beat a retreat. The officer rebukes them calling them cowards for getting scared of the mask. He walks towards the mask, puts aside his army cap and wears it, making a cockerel sound and hopping about playfully toward the soldiers who respond to his play-act by laughing. Suddenly, he begins to scream and tears frantically at his face as if the mask has become stuck to his face. As he falls down crying, the soldiers flee shouting "N'Komo" and remarking that a mask on an albino (white body) signifies an abomination. Albinos are extremely light-skinned children begotten by Africans. They used to be dedicated to the gods of the community where they are born as shrine slaves and objects of ritual sacrifice. As the officer reels on the ground crying, there follows a series of cut aways to reaction shots where we find old women priestesses who guard the shrine, fleeing in horror. In another cut away, we find the sultan's envoy tied to a stake close to the scene shouting "Bi similah!" in prayer for protection. When the officer finally tears the mask from his face, we find it full of red soldier ants, a furious tropical African specie notorious for their extremely hurtful sting. In terms of a narrative explanation of why the mask was loaded with soldier-ants, we are told by Dr. Henric (Didier Sauvegrain) that the ants had been attracted to the mask by the scent of blood. But whatever the explanation, it seems like retributive justice for the officer's derisive treatment of traditional African object of religious worship. And in a film where the French officers are supposed to put up a face by playing gods from the sky sent, according to Voulet, to rule over the blacks, it certainly is a literal de-masking of a god when the soldiers see their officer crying like a child.

The next incident takes place in the sequence preceding the troops' withdrawal from Lugu. The sequence begins with a leftward tracking shot in the scene where the

soldiers debate the possibility of a mutiny to compensate for the loss of their war booties and captives and force Voulet to withdraw from Lugu. In actual fact, though their immediate complaint is loss of war booty, their ulterior motive is fear of Sarraounia's N'Komo. When Coulibaly walks into the impending mutiny and tries to dissuade the soldiers from doing so, they set upon him and he flees for his dear life, and to alert Voulet who is drawing up an ordinance map for an attack on Sarraounia. While Coulibaly breathlessly alerts Voulet about the mutiny, the latter calmly instructs the former to get some of the loot taken from Sarraounia's palace so that he can use it to bribe the soldiers. This thin veneer of calmness with which Voulet receives the news of the mutiny will later contrast with his near deranged demeanour towards the end of the sequence. In the debate that takes place before the arrival of Voulet on the scene, we find that far from accepting Corporal Traore's arguments that they betrayed Samory Toure - the king of the Mali Empire who was deposed and exiled by the French - because they deserted him, the soldiers are only interested in forcing Voulet to withdraw from Lugu for fear of N'Komo. When Voulet arrives on the scene, he tries some of the old tricks which he had used to secure their loyalty in the past - e.g. promises of larger rewards - and finds that the soldiers are not ready to compromise. Tinga, one of the princes who enlisted after he had been disinherited by the French, captures the soldiers' level of anxiety about Sarraounia's N'Komo when he informs Voulet that her fetish is evil: "It eats our hearts in our chest. It's already made some of us impotent, sir!"

Gradually the events build up into a climax when Voulet, in desperation to win back the confidence of the troops, decks himself up as a woman in Sarraounia's clothes and jewellery and tries to simulate an erotic scene of attractive women, in order to enkindle the soldiers' lust for women and their loyalty. In a crane shot taken from above the head of the soldiers, we find Voulet standing rather inappropriately behind the soldiers instead of being in front of them, invoking a wide variety of booty and women to tempt them and win back their confidence, in an act which he himself likens to self-clowning since the soldiers do not pay attention to him. As he tries to end his

unapplauded improvisation, he experiences temporal loss of self-control not dissimilar to that which the officer had in the earlier mentioned incident. It begins as an entrapment within the costumes of Sarraounia which he has just used as a figurative mask for improvisation. After dismissing the soldiers and agreeing to withdraw, he begins to kick at the dust in front of him in an uncontrollable frenzy. Gradually he experiences temporary loss of self-control. Chanoine then moves to him and calms him down by removing from his neck Sarraounia's piece of jewellery, which is narrativised as the object responsible for his entrapment and temporal loss of self-control. As he is being de-robed of his improvisatory accoutrements, Voulet remarks: "I'm alright, Julian, I'm French!" This remark is an important act of self-absolution in traditional African belief-systems. Of course, Voulet does not realise the significance of his utterance, but an African spectator knowledgeable in African belief-systems will know that his utterance amounts to an act of self-absolution. In traditional African belief-systems, if a stranger feels he is being punished unjustly by the malevolent forces of his host community, he can invoke, verbally, the principle of self-absolution to protect himself, and the mere pronouncement of this principle is thought to help neutralise the malevolent forces. The significance of these two sequences lies, beside momentary comic relief, in the fact that they help to remove the thin veneer of the superiority complex which the officers have worn up till now and exposes them in their plain human idiosyncrasies. These two sequences also mark the beginning of total breakdown in discipline and morale among the troops.

Beside belief-systems, symbolic elements of worship and social ranking, the question of name and naming, and the rhetoric of traditional African public discourse, the other most noticeable elements of authentication of pre-colonial African culture in the film are architectural structures and costumes. The rectangular mud buildings with flat mud roofs and mud walls enclosing large courtyards dotted with individual huts are authentic architectural structures of the savannah belt in pre-colonial West Africa. Even in these days of modern apartments blocks, flats, mansions, etc., this age-old

architectural practice still predominates in the older sections of most cities located in the savannah belt. The costumes are also authentication of what was worn by most people of the region at the time. The only exception in this regard is the flashforward towards the end of the film where we find youths dressed in contemporary youth clothing. This flashforward is of course meant to relate the past events to the present. Thus after Sarraounia and her historical train move off screen, the scene reverts to an ordinary contemporary youth playground, a figurative way of linking past events to the present with an underlying catch that the youth of today needs to learn from the lessons of history so as to avoid the mistakes of their forefathers. Beside this last scene, the costumes worn by most people in this film are what are still predominantly worn by people across West Africa today. This traditional clothing comprises: *agbada*, *buba* and *shokoto* with hand woven caps, etc., for men and *buba*, *wrapper*, etc., for women. Modern designs of these clothings are of course much more varied and glamorous nowadays. Traditional clothing, and, office wear which is made up of mostly Western clothing and designs, form the thoroughfare of contemporary West African fashion.

All these elements of cultural authentication help to build up an idyllic image of pre-colonial Africa as a self-sufficient society built on subsistence farming, trade and animal husbandry. The jostling for spheres of influence by traditional African rulers, represented through inter-ethnic rivalries, also indicates that a process of nation building was on across Africa at the onset of colonial conquest and rule. The Sokoto Caliphate which stretches beyond the boundaries of the modern day Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Benin Empire of Oba Ovonramwen Nogbaisi, the Oyo kingdom, Kanem Borno Empire, etc., all of which are also part of present day Nigeria, the Ashanti kingdom of Ghana, the Mali Empire of Samory Toure, etc., all covered land areas far larger than most of the modern states constituted by European powers in the nineteenth century. Most of the traditional rulers of the kingdoms cited and indeed many others across Africa still rule their subjects beyond the boundaries of modern African states. Perhaps,

this is why the film represents the current boundaries of African countries as forcible creations carved up in blood.

With respect to character representation, invariably Sarraounia stands out. Most actions revolve around her personality and narrative details related to her childhood and Spartan upbringing are furnished in the narrative flashback sequences. Despite the early loss of her mother, the image of the young Sarraounia which comes across in the flashback sequences is that of a person who had a happy childhood. When the flashback begins, we find her playing in the company of her agetates. But in keeping with her characterisation as a born warrior, she is cast in a role of leader among them, and the game they are playing is appropriately the war game of throwing a spear, a figurative foreshadowing of her future role as warrior-queen. Her teenage years are spent mostly in the company of her uncle who teaches her the art of governance, traditional warfare and herbal healing methods. But the rigid masculine role into which she is cast through verbal indoctrination and physical training by her uncle later creates in her a major character flaw. This character flaw is reflected in her inability to sustain a marital affair with Baka. Besides this flaw however, the overall image of Sarraounia which emerges in the film is that of a resolute ruler determined to protect and preserve the freedom and liberty of her people from both internal colonialism of the sort posed by the authority of the Sultan of Sokoto and external colonialism represented by the French colonial expedition force.

Her reputation in sorcery and warfare bestows upon her the image of a dangerous and uncontrollable woman, a *femme fatale* whose name strikes terror in the minds of her enemies. The Sarraounia persona is not a strange one to the African continent. In fact, Africa has always had very powerful women. Her persona therefore recalls such other equally powerful historical figures, all of whom ruled with an iron hand and were fiercely independent, like Queen Amina of Zaria and Queen Ida of Benin, and female warrior figures such as the dreaded, ferocious single-breasted women soldiers of the Dahomey kingdom referred to in history as the Amazons. Sarraounia is

also the only African character granted spectatorial spatial closeness and narrative authority throughout the film. She is constantly shot in medium close-ups, most of the times to highlight her facial beauty and femininity which contrasts sharply with her image of sorcerer and irrepressible warrior. At other times, especially in the sequences preceding the attack on Lugu, this spatial closeness helps to exteriorise her internal anxieties about the impending attack by the Voulet-Chanoine force. All the other African characters, including the traditional rulers, are not granted spatial closeness. They are shot flatly, without depth, mostly in medium long shots trained at theatricalised ensemble acting which gives no room for individualised characterisation. Occasionally, when they are shot in medium shots, it is accompanied by quick cuts which prevents intimacy of any sort.

The only other character granted comparable but unequal spatial closeness in the film is Captain Voulet. For instance, in the withdrawal sequence, he is captured in a rather long reflective mood which begins, first, as his voice-over commentary upon the disorganised and disorderly column withdrawing from Lugu, which towards the end of the film contrasts radically with the orderly and disciplined column which we saw at the beginning of the film. The voice-over commentary is later anchored through a cut to a medium close-up of Voulet in a thoughtful mood. Incidentally, this is the only case of individualised character-narration - effected in this case, through mental process subjective reflection - in the film. As a result of the spatial closeness effected through Voulet's reflective (almost regretful) mood, towards the end of the film, he cuts the image of a tragic figure overrun by personal greed for power and fame. However, in terms of the relation of narrative authority through spatial positioning with respect to other characters in the film, especially in dialogue scenes involving him and Chanoine or Coulibaly, he is shot in the classical dialogue format of shot/reverse shot which does not transit into dollying into medium close-ups which would otherwise privilege him over the other character with whom he is involved in dialogue. The only character granted this form of spatial privilege is Sarraounia. This occurs in the dialogue scene involving

her and her fetish doctor, Boka, when she goes to inquire about the outcome of the impending attack, and in the scene of her first encounter with Baka when he returns to help defend Lugu.

As a result of this spatial generosity and non discriminating spatial articulation in relation to the characterisation of the main protagonist and antagonist in the film, Sarraounia and Voulet respectively, character-subjectivity in *Sarraounia* is realised more through the quality and tone of verbal discourse and narrative actions than through spatial articulation. For instance, we get a sense of Voulet's cruelty and murderous predisposition not through spatial distortions or make-up meant to highlight his deviousness but through his verbal denigration of Africans and devaluation of African lives through narrative actions. Likewise, we get a sense of Sarraounia's greatness and heroism, more, through her fiery exhortatory speeches, magical powers and participation in battle scenes, than through forms of spatial articulations.

In an interview which he granted James Leahy in 1988, Hondo, relating his editing style in the film, states that "I always try to use dialectical montage, to put the spectator in a dangerous situation, to keep the spectator questioning, awake" (Leahy, 1988:10). This form of dialectical editing stands out in the way in which sequences are juxtaposed in *Sarraounia* to create levels of contrast, irony, and critical awareness in the spectator. For instance, the sequence dealing with the representation of the nineteenth century division of Africa among the European powers, recounted through voice-over narration and the symbolic splitting of a sculptured map of the continent, ends with Moslems hastily fleeing a prayer ground. This is immediately followed by a cut to a full frontal view of Voulet and Chanoine at the head of the expedition force. This juxtaposition uses the current image to explain the hasty evacuation of the prayer ground in the last sequence as well as prefiguring what follows. For in the next sequence which follows this one, we find an anxious Sarraounia moving restlessly about in her palace. We will later learn that the cause of her anxiety is the news of the invading army of the preceding sequence. In another sequence, the traditional ruler of a besieged

village who thought he could spare his village's destruction by offering to play host to the invading force, has his efforts crowned, ironically, with the destruction he sought to avoid. Later in the film, when Serkin Arewa tries to convince his son, the Prince of Matankari, that by playing host to the invaders they will spare their families the horrors of war, the earlier failed attempt of such an overture presents a contrastive nullification of Serkin Arewa's optimism. Furthermore, during the war of attrition between Sarraounia and the Voulet-Chanoine force, the editing pattern becomes much more dialectical as it relates alternating montages of activities within both camps. A classic example of this form of editing is shown in the scene of both camps set in the forest outlying Lugu. The first of these alternating montages begins with a tracking shot, following Voulet and his troops, from screen left to right, as they search the outskirts of the forest fully aware of their vulnerability within the area. In an alternating montage, deep inside the forest, we find Sarraounia, followed by another tracking shot, this time, one moving in opposite direction, from screen right to left, as she challenges Voulet and his force to dare move into the forest.

Thus through this combination of alternating montages related through a complex form of narration incorporating omniscient narration, narrative flashback, voice-over narration, and subjective reflection, *Sarraounia* unveils a multiplicity of contesting voices and levels of meaning, all tied to the divergent opinions of various groups within the text, and all bearing upon the theme of resistance to colonialism advanced in the film. These contesting voices and opinions about the emergent conflict of external colonial invasion, are also reflected, at the linguistic level, as I earlier noted, in the internal division and jostle for power within Africa by rival ethnic/linguistic groups. However, whereas before the advent of colonialism the struggle for power and influence within the region raged between the Djoula (spoken in Sarraounia's kingdom), Peuhl (spoken by the Fulani) and the Tamashek (spoken by the Tuareg) speaking ethnic groups, with the advent of colonialism, other levels of power, represented by the French and the British, impose a new linguistic order. In addition to the contending indigenous

languages, the seeds of new linguistic hegemonies are signified in the emergence of French and British colonial authorities. The emergence of these colonial authorities also signifies the advent of new linguistic realities - i.e. that represented in the colonial and post-colonial eras, by the constitution of new subjects, in addition to their mother tongues, in imperial languages and their corruptions such as French, pidgin French, English, pidgin English.

In sum, as I earlier noted, the image of Sarraounia, as constructed in the film, is very much in close keeping with the narrative traditions of the epic. She is an idealised heroine whose character flaws are overlooked in an attempt to foreground her heroic resistance to French imperialism. Furthermore, her story covers only an aspect of the overall events leading to the constitution of the modern state of Niger by the French. Her resistance, in effect, did not alter the course of history. It is celebrated here as an invocation of an existing ancient African tradition of resistance to all forms of foreign domination.

7.5. Background notes on Ousmane Sembène.

Ousmane Sembène was born on 1 January, 1923 in Ziguinchor, a town in the Casamance region of Senegal. He spent most of his childhood under the tutelage and care of his maternal uncle, Abdou Rahmane Diop, a devout Muslim and Koranic school teacher from whom he learnt a lot about oral African history, culture and tradition. Following the death of his uncle in 1935, Sembène was put under the care of a relation who lives in Dakar. Here, for a while, he pursued his elementary school education which he later abandoned toward the end of his studies because of disagreements with his headmaster. At the age of fourteen, he began to try his hands in various trades, working first as a mechanic, and as a carpenter before undertaking apprenticeship in masonry. During this period also, he began to show interest in artistic endeavours by participating in local amateur theatrical activities, and concerts, as well as attending performances by professional griots, local historical raconteurs, from whom he learnt a lot about African

legends and great historical epics, and traditional storytelling techniques which have immensely influenced both his literary outputs and his films.

At the age of nineteen, Sembène joined the French colonial army at the outbreak of the Second World War and fought for four years in campaigns both in Africa and in Europe. After his discharge from the military in 1947, he participated in the Dakar-Niger railroad strike for better wages and improved working conditions. The strike, which lasted from October 1947 to March 1948, later furnished him with materials for his first major novel, *God's Bits of Wood*. His participation in the strike also signalled the beginning of his political and labour union activism, both of which he devoted a lot of attention and active participation during his stay in France. After the strike, Sembène emigrated to France where he worked as a factory worker at the Citroen motor factory near Paris before moving on to Marseilles where he became a labour union leader activist while working at the Dockyard. He subsequently actively participated in both the political and cultural debates that followed the emergence of the Négritude Movement, as well as participating in the First International Congress of Black Writers and Artists held in Paris in 1956. Sembène is however one of the very few black Francophone writers who right from the beginning of the Negritude Movement criticised its key concepts (Ghali: 52). In 1957, he wrote *O Pays, mon beau peuple!* (Oh My Country, My Beautiful People), a novel about a Senegalese war veteran who, with his French wife, returns to his native village and subsequently embarks upon self-help development projects through organisation of the peasants and application of modern agricultural techniques to farming. This was followed by the publication in 1960 of his major work, *Les Bouts de bois de Dieu* (God's Bits of Wood), an epic novel based on his personal fictional account of the 1947 Dakar-Niger railroad strike. Since then, he has published a collection of short stories, *Voltaïque* (Tribal Scars, 1962) and novels such as *L' Harmattan* (1964), *Le Mandat* (The Money Order, 1965), *Vehi Ciosane ou Blanche-Genese* (White Genesis, 1965), and *Xala* (1974). Some of these novels such as *Le Mandat* and *Xala* have been made successful into films by Sembène.

The year 1961 was a watershed in the writing career of Sembène. By that year, he had come to the conclusion that no matter how popular his novels were, only the élites who can read and write would have access to them since the majority of the populace in his country, as indeed elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa, were illiterates. His search for a popular form that will bear the same themes of colonial atrocities and exploitation by the French and the neo-colonial corruption and bad governments by African elites, etc. - themes which have pre-occupied him in his novels - led him to opt for the cinema. In an interview which he granted Teshome Gabriel in 1975, Sembène explained the events that led to his decision to opt for filmmaking thus:

before becoming a filmmaker, I'd already written several books. I think that I am a committed writer, and I'm not ashamed to say so. My commitment is to raise awareness and bring the people to change their situation. I live in Africa, and no matter what happens tomorrow, I will not go into exile. But the problem when I was writing books was that, I was only known by the elite minority. When I talked with the masses, some had heard about me or they had seen my picture in the newspaper but other than that, that is all they knew about me. And so the problem for me was to get involved in an art like cinema, which has a larger audience (Gabriel, 1979: 112).

In 1961 Sembène was awarded scholarship by the USSR government to study film in that country. This enabled him to study filmmaking for two years at the Gorki Studios in Moscow, under such distinguished teachers as Mark Donskoi and Sergei Gerasimov. On his return to Africa in 1963, filmmaking began to take predominance over his writing career. On the year he returned, the government of Mali commissioned him to make a short documentary, on the Songhai Empire, *L' Empire Sonhrai*. Next, he shot his first feature, *Borom Sarret* (1963) - a film which deals with the misfortunes of a cart driver in Dakar - produced by his production company, Domirev. In 1964 Sembène adapted *Vehi Ciosane ou Blanche-Genese*, a novel which he published the following year, into film. The adaptation however seemed not to have succeeded because the resulting thirty-five minute film, *Niaye* (1964), was never released. His first successful feature length film, *La Noire de* (Black Girl, 1960) - which deals with the sufferings and eventual suicide of a young African maid in France - is also presently considered Black Africa's first feature length film. This has since been followed by highly rated works such as *Mandabi* (The

Money Order, 1968), *Taw* (1970), a documentary on youth unemployment in Dakar, shot for the National Council of the Church of Christ, and *Emitai* (1972) which deals with Second World War revolt by the people of Diola of the Casamance region, against French colonial authority. This was followed by *Xala* (1974), a social satire on modern African élites and the neo-colonial state, and *Ceddo* (1977), which deals with efforts made by Africans to contain the spread and influence of Arab and Islamic culture in Africa during the early days of European advent on the continent. In 1988, Sembène and his co-director, Thierno Faty Sow, revisited events of the Second World War in *Camp de Thiaroye*, a film which deals with the December 1944 French massacre of West African infantrymen in Dakar who were awaiting their discharge from the army at the end of their tour of duty. His latest film, *Guelwaar* (1992), deals with the politics of foreign aid in Africa.

7.6. A Critical Reading of Ousmane Sembène and Thierno Faty Sow's *Camp de Thiaroye*.

The events represented in *Camp de Thiaroye* are intricately tied to the overall political conflicts and intrigues that emerged between the supporters of General de Gaulle and his Free French Army and the adherents of the Vichy regime of Marshal Pétain who concluded an armistice with Germany in 1940 after the occupation of France, whereby France, or rather the rump of France, Southern France, was left under French rule, and her Empire would be neutral during the Second World War. As a result of this armistice, between 1940 and 1942, the Pétain appointed administration of Pierre Boisson in French West Africa, with its base in Dakar, was hostile to both the Free French Army of de Gaulle and the Allies. Though German and Italian nationals were barred from French West African territories, so, too, were agents of General de Gaulle. But as French society was divided over the armistice in France, so, too, were overseas French administrators. The supporters of de Gaulle therefore continued surreptitiously to recruit

troops in the region, employing agents in neighbouring Anglophone West African countries, despite Boisson's objections and sabotage of their efforts.

While French West Africa was partially neutralised due to Boisson's adherence to the terms of the armistice, the governments of French Equatorial Africa, led by Félix Éboué, the Guyanese Governor of Chad, revolted against the Vichy regime and rallied around de Gaulle. Through Chad, the pro-Vichy administrations in Cameroun and Gabon were quickly overthrown and pro-de Gaulle men installed. Soon afterward, Congo-Brazzaville switched over allegiance to de Gaulle and Félix Eboué was appointed Governor General of French Equatorial Africa with its base at Brazzaville. This switch in allegiance gave de Gaulle the much needed land-base for his Free French campaign. From his land base in Brazzaville, de Gaulle mobilised the whole of French Equatorial Africa through its northern access in Chad, with the help of the Allies in British West Africa, for the liberation of North Africa, preliminary to the eventual invasion of France. While many French troops stationed in French West Africa were loyal to the Vichy regime and refused to participate in the liberation efforts of France, there were many West African volunteers who joined forces with de Gaulle in French Equatorial Africa and fought through North Africa into France. Most of the repatriated *tirailleurs*, Francophone African infantrymen, who were massacred in December 1944, were made up of both West African infantrymen and those from French Equatorial Africa. The acrimony that is reflected in *Camp de Thiaroye* between those that fought for the liberation of France like the *tirailleurs* and their commander, Captain Raymond, and the French troops based in Dakar who initially honoured the armistice and who refused to fight, is born of the conflicts between the supporters of General de Gaulle and those of the Vichy regime (Crowder, 1978: 268-281, Pedler, 1979: 46-65).

The fact that the production itself was funded by the national film corporations of Senegal, Algeria and Tunisia, is a tribute to the earlier mentioned co-operative efforts that led to the liberation of North Africa during the Second World War. While *Camp de Thiaroye* attacks the collaborative Vichy regime in Dakar and France, it does not spare

de Gaulle either, because most of the massacres carried out by the French troops among the Diola people of the Cassamance of Senegal during the Vichy regime - where both Sembène and the Sergeant-Major in the film, Diatta, come from - continued after the liberation of France and de Gaulle's assumption of power. The same is true of the massacre at Thiaroye Camp upon which the film is based. I have had to examine the background of events in French West Africa because they are necessary for a thorough comprehension of the tone of debates in *Camp de Thiaroye* between the resident French colonial force and the *tirailleurs* who fought for the liberation of France.

Camp de Thiaroye is an historical representation of the events that built up to the massacre on December 1, 1944, of a group of repatriated *tirailleurs*, who are awaiting their discharge having completed their tours of duty. The plot of *Camp de Thiaroye* is a straightforward simple one, with conflicts emerging from time to time as the story unfolds. There are a number of sequences in the film which help to define the nature of relationship that existed between French colonial authorities and their African subjects during the Second World War. I shall be examining some of these sequences in order to determine the nature of subjectivity constructed in respect of both African and European characters in the film. The sequences are: the opening sequence; arrival at the camp at Thiaroye and revelations about the cause of Pays's loss of speech; protest over inedible food; visit by Diatta's uncle, Bintu, and Captain Raymond's return of Diatta's novel; protest over refusal by the French military authorities to grant the soldiers the correct exchange rate and accusations regarding the source of the soldiers' money; and the taking of the General as hostage and the consequent massacre of the unarmed soldiers.

The opening sequence begins with a shot of the port of Dakar packed with the relations and well-wishers of the returning soldiers. In the foreground of screen right we see two soldiers bearing a wounded colleague on a stretcher through the ship's gangway to an ambulance close to it at screen right. Behind the gangway is a truck waiting to take wounded soldiers to Thiaroye camp. In the mid frame space is an Army Band

playing, with an Army jeep and a staff car adjacent to them. In the furthest background at extreme screen right, behind the Army Band, is a group of African relations of the soldiers; and at screen left, separate from the Africans, are French citizens. Next, there is a cut to a shot of the frontal view of the ship's gangway taken from the foot of the gangway. We see the two soldiers bearing the stretcher, followed closely behind by two wounded soldiers and Captain Raymond. In a cut to a cross-section of the crowd, we notice that the French citizens are made up of mostly women and children, with many of them chanting "Long live France, Long live de Gaulle!", in honour of his role in the liberation of France. At the end of the focus on the crowd, there is a cut to Captain Raymond reporting to Major Auguste and Captain Labrousse. Captain Labrousse, looking at the disembarking soldiers, complains at the irregularity of their kits, and Raymond informs him that if the American military had not donated uniforms to the soldiers, they would have arrived in rags. This sequence is significant for three reasons. First, the division of the colonial space along racial lines. The Africans and the French citizens occupy different arches of the reception venue. Second, the ironical injustice suffered by African infantrymen who went to fight for the liberation of France from German occupation, and who, upon completing the task, would have returned home in tattered uniforms if the American military had not donated uniforms to them. It is ironical because one would have expected that as a people under foreign occupation, the French would have been grateful to their liberators irrespective of the status (in this instance, the Africans were French subjects) rather than to have treated them shabily. The film stresses that the treatment meted out to the African infantrymen was a deliberate one: whereas the French military refused to supply those returning from the warfront with uniforms, at the end of the film, those replacing the demobilised soldiers are supplied uniforms. Third, the tragic experiences of individual soldiers. Pays had become deaf and dumb from torture in Buchenwald, and Diatta will soon learn that his parents were killed in an operation carried out by the French colonial force in Senegal.

Thus, of the disembarking soldiers, apart from a momentary focus on the deaf and dumb Private Pays and Lance-Corporal Diarra, only Sergeant-Major Diatta is given special emphasis. When Diatta disembarks he is followed by a brief pan towards screen left that ends with his embrace of his uncle, and the uncle's introduction of his wife and daughter to Diatta. On noticing Diatta greeting his relations, Captain Raymond, who had been standing with Major Auguste and Captain Labrousse in the background of screen left, a little distance away from the family, walks across to greet them. Diatta introduces him to the family and then Raymond asks him how they greet in their village in Diola and he is told. But when he stretches out his hand to greet Diatta's uncle, the uncle hesitantly takes his hand. Noticing that his presence is not welcome, Raymond excuses himself. Diatta who is surprised at his uncle's behaviour asks if all is well at Effok, their village, and in response to the question, his uncle's wife and her daughter, Bintu, clasp their arms across their shoulders in a mournful gesture and turn their back to Diatta, to signify that all is not well. When he asks his uncle what the problem is, he tells him that he will give him detailed information later. The information which is later given to Diatta when he is visited at Thiaroye camp by his uncle's wife and daughter, Bintu, is that in 1942, their village was burnt down by the resident French colonial troops and that his parents were part of the casualties of the massacre. Though the cause of the massacre at Effok is not given in this film, in an earlier one, *Emitai*, Sembène gives the cause of the massacre during the Second World War in the village of Effok, in the Cassamance region of Senegal, as resistance to forced enlistment into the French colonial army and requisition for farm produce by the French military. Even before the outbreak of the Second World War obligatory forced labour was a tool of French colonial administration. For instance, Crowder informs us that

prior to the Second World War, French West Africa had been economically and politically dominated by the metropolis. In the political sphere, apart from the *Quatre Communes* of Senegal, no African had rights other than a small group of *citoyens*, numbering not more than 2,136 in 1936. The overwhelming majority of the population was classified as *sujets* or subjects, who came under the harsh codes of the *indigenat* or code of administrative justice whereby they could be imprisoned without trial by the administration. It also subjected them to compulsory

military service, obligatory forced labour, compulsory cultivation of crops and above all made any form of political activity all but impossible (Crowder: 268-269).

As a result of the policy of forced requisition for farm produce, most Senegalese either resisted farming or resorted to hiding their farm produce. The disruption of farming activities in France after the outbreak of the Second World War also further exacerbated this policy. The tradition then was for the troops to raid the villages in search of food. It was during one of such raids, when the people of Effok refused to surrender their farm produce, that the village was sacked. In an interview which Sembène granted Nouredine Ghali in 1976, he makes the point that as far as Africa was concerned there was no major difference in policy towards Africa between the fascist regime of Marshal Pétain under whose government the massacre at Effok was carried out, and that of the liberator General de Gaulle whose government sanctioned the massacre at Thiaroye camp in December, 1944. As he puts it:

for us, who were then the colonised, Pétain and de Gaulle were the same thing, even if young people today know there is a difference between them. The story of the soldiers killed in Senegal is de Gaulle; the story of Algeria in 1945 is de Gaulle; the story of Madagascar is de Gaulle: why do people want de Gaulle presented as a hero or super-hero? . . . Where I come from, he was a colonialist and he behaved as such (Ghali, 1976: 48).

This theme that bars distinction between Pétain and de Gaulle in respect of their African policies is fully exploited by Sembène and Sow in *Camp de Thiaroye*. In the sequence that deals with this argument in some detail, which I will be analysing shortly, Diatta draws an analogy between the Nazi massacre in the French village of Oradour-Sur-Glane and that of the French colonial troops in the Senegalese village of Effok. Captain Raymond, with whom he debates this issue, takes a rather defensive stance by arguing that there is no justification for drawing a comparison between what he calls Nazi barbarism and the dictates of the French Army. Diatta, on his part, counters Raymond's attempts at differentiation by stating that the armies in the cases in question were colonial armies and that they have the same mentality. The opening sequence thus highlights some of the ethical issues related to Franco-African relationship that will be fully exploited later in the film. It also highlights the dilemma of the liberal French, e.g.

Captain Raymond, caught in the cross-fire between the excesses of a fascist colonial regime and the response of the victims of the regime to French people interested in cultivating genuine relationship with Africans, between the limits of altruistic patriotism constrained by colonialism and the desire for true human understanding and friendship.

The next sequence I would like to examine is that which deals with the official reception of the soldiers by the commandant of Thiaroye Camp, Captain Labrousse. The sequence begins with the reception of the soldiers and ends with Pays's subjective flashback. The scenes I will be focusing on are those that deal with Pays's experiences at Buchenwald and the relevance of this experience to the views later expressed by Labrousse concerning African prisoners of war in German concentration camps. The first scene that gives the spectator an intimate knowledge of the Pays's character begins at the end of the commandant's address to the soldiers at the parade ground. As the soldiers disperse to their various blocks, there is a cut to Pays moving almost in a trance-like state toward screen left, followed by a slow pan, with a mouth organ improvised sound-effect signifying impending danger in the sound track. Towards the end of the pan, we notice that the object of Pays's focus is a watch tower guarded by a sentry. Next there is a cut to Pays as he shifts his attention to the barb wire fence of the camp, followed by a close-up point-of-view shot of him as he moves closer to the fence, looks at it, and at the guards at the watch towers in both off screen left and right. Gradually he begins to turn around at the same position to get a total view of the four guards guarding the watch towers. With the accomplishment of the sound effects, Pays's scrutiny of the security arrangements of the camp gives one a sense of foreboding danger. This is an army demobilisation camp fenced by barb wire with a single gate and four strategically located watch towers guarded regularly around the clock.

We will later be told that Pays was a prisoner of war at Buchenwald, where he lost his power of speech due to torture. As Pays digests the security arrangements of the camp, there is a cut to a group of soldiers carrying their bags from the truck that brought them from the port. This is followed by a cut to Lance-Corporal Diarra and a

group of soldiers carrying Sergeant-Major Diatta's belongings to his quarter. As Diatta opens the door for the soldiers, he notices that Diarra is carrying two kits and asks him why he is carrying a double kit. Diarra informs him that one belongs to Pays. Next, there is a cut to Pays moving forward to feel the barb wire fence. As he does this the soldiers in the blocks overlooking where Pays is standing come out of their blocks to watch the scene. Diarra joins him by the fence and tries to comfort him. He bends down, fetches some sand and pours it at the back of Pays's palm, telling him that they are now on African soil and assuring him that they are not in a concentration camp, that Buchenwald is over. While Diatta is comforting him, Pays continues examining the camp like a man in a trance. Next, there is a cut to two soldiers looking at the scene. One of them comments that Pays's experiences at Buchenwald have cracked him up a bit. In a cut back to Diarra and Pays, Diarra continues rubbing the sand slowly at the back of Pays's palm while telling him that he should feel the warm soil of Africa, that soon they will go back home to see their mothers and fathers in their village. He gives Pays his kit to carry and leads him gently away from the fence.

The next immediate scene which also focuses on Pays begins with a shot of a group of soldiers bathing in a communal bath and others washing their clothes in wash basins in front of the bath. This is followed by a cut to two soldiers preparing to hang their clothes. As they move toward the fence to dry their clothes, they are followed by a pan toward screen left which reveals Pays dressed in complete German trooper gear with helmet on, blocks their way since he imagines that the barb wire fence may be connected to live current. He gestures at them to look at the guard on the watch tower. Instead of trying to understand what Pays is communicating to them, they beat a retreat, having misinterpreted his gestures to be antagonistic. One of them comments that Pays spent too long a time in German concentration camps. He advises his colleagues that they should leave him alone or he might fight them, adding for good measure that he is completely crazy. When Pays notices that they are not taking note of what he is trying to explain to them, he simply stretches out his hands in a crucifix-like fashion to block their

path and growls at them. As they walk away, there is a cut to a medium close up of Pays accompanied by martial drums and the sound of the boots of storm troopers marching. Next, there is a cut to a medium close-up of the side view of him, displaying the "SS" sign on his helmet. As he turns his head slowly to look at the guard at the watch tower in the background towards screen left, there is a cut to a flashback scene full of memories of his days at Buchenwald. The flashback scene which is shot in black and white begins with a medium close-up of the side view of a lone German trooper maintaining the same pose as Pays's at the beginning of the transition into the flashback. Next, there is a cut to a man hanging on a barb wire fence accompanied by a burst of gun fire. This is followed by a cut to a side view of the man hanging on the fence with the fence stretching out into a vanishing point in the background where we see the silhouettes of parading guards. The flashback scene ends with a cut to a group of prisoners of war sleeping on the bare ground of the camp.

The importance of these two scenes lie in the fact that they totally contradict a statement which Captain Labrousse will later make at a meeting called by the General at army headquarters to discuss the rate at which to exchange the soldiers' money and matters related to payment of their gratuities. At that meeting, Labrousse asserts that the soldiers may have been subjected to good treatment and manipulated or even paid by the Nazis or the Bolsheviks to destabilise the Empire, otherwise they would not have survived their stay in the concentration camps. Raymond, who is peeved by the cruel remark, reminds him that as far as Hitler was concerned, Jews, Communists, Freemasons, Gypsies, and Blacks, were all enmarked for elimination. The example of Pays who lost his speech power due to torture at Buchenwald, completely destroys the credibility of Labrousse's remark. In this sequence as in many others, he equates any opposition to the policies of French colonial authorities as evidence that the soldiers have been brainwashed to revolt against France.

The two scenes are also significant for other reasons. First, they privilege Pays's subjectivity because he is shot mostly, in close-ups and medium close-ups, which grant

spectatorial accessibility to him. Second, even though he cannot speak, his point of view is put across, through his subjective flashback. In the flashback scenes, the spectator is made to experience the horrors of Buchenwald through his memory recall, thereby making the spectator to empathise with him. Besides, Pays is the only character in the film who is granted narrative authority through subjective flashback. In the case of Diatta, even though the spectator is granted spatial accessibility to him through the use of close-ups and medium close-ups, especially, in the scene where he gives a forceful long speech when they are accused by the French officers of acquiring the money they want to exchange by stripping corpses in the warfront, his internal anxieties are externalised only once in the film when he writes his wife.

With respect to imagery, one can give several interpretations to Pays's possession and usage of the German army uniform. First, the possession of the uniform can be interpreted as a war memorabilia, and as a sign of bravery. In traditional African societies, the worth of a warrior is measured by the numbers of uniforms and charms of opponents in a warrior's possession. One interpretation could be that Pays's possession of the army uniform is in recognition of this tradition. Second, African Second World War veterans have a lot of respect for the discipline, ruthless efficiency and fighting spirit of German soldiers. Since, Pays always wears the German army uniform or only the helmet in situations requiring vigilance, one interpretation could be that wearing the uniform is a signification for alertness and ruthless efficiency. Third, one could interpret the imagery of the German army uniform as a satire on the barbarism of the Second World War.

With respect to the cause of conflicts in the film, evidence from the film indicate that the soldiers' protests are reactions to the policies of the French colonial authorities. A typical example is the cause of conflict between the soldiers and the authorities in the sequence dealing with the soldiers' protests over the inedibility of their first meal at the camp. The sequence begins with the soldiers rejecting the meal because it contains no meat and it is watery, and ends with a *marabout* slaughtering a sheep for their own meal.

The scene I shall be examining is that which deals with the arrival and inspection of the meal by Captains Labrousse and Raymond, after they have been phoned by Lieutenant Pierre. Before their arrival, the soldiers have protested to the cook, who informs them that portions of meat are given to soldiers in accordance with racial and class gradation, a gradation which has whites at the top and the *tirailleurs* at the bottom. The scene begins with Captains Labrousse and Raymond driving into the camp, followed by a cut to the soldiers at their dining shed. The three officers, Pierre, Labrousse and Raymond, join the soldiers at the shed. As they inspect the food they are followed by a leftward tracking shot. Toward the end of the track, one of the soldiers attempts to show his bowl of meal to Captain Labrousse, who pushes it back onto the table as they move on. Next, they move toward the kitchen at extreme screen left, where Labrousse asks the cook why the soldiers refuse to eat. The cook tells him he does not know because he cooked the usual meal of rice, potatoes and beans. As they converse, one of the soldiers takes a specimen of the meal to Raymond. He inspects the meal closely and asks the cook why it contains no meat. He tells him that he received no meat. Labrousse himself adds that it is the usual ration. Next, there is a cut to a medium close-up of Raymond taking a measure of the meal and smelling it. He then tells the other officers that it is quite bad and inedible. Labrousse, who is embarrassed by Raymond's observation, calls him aside for a tête-à-tête. As they move toward the gate, he tells Raymond that the soldiers are usually given meat once a week, that at their homes they eat just rice and millet. Raymond responds by telling him that even if that were true, it will not be excuse for denying them meat in their meal. He further reminds him that the men are soldiers returning from the war front and that they deserve better meals. What then follows as they are about to drive away after Raymond has borrowed a novel from Diatta is that they find the soldiers who are supposedly brought up on a diet of plain rice and millet returning from the village with chickens, goats and sheep meant for the preparation of their own meal. The good thing, however, about this protest is that after this incident,

the authorities from then on supply beef for their meals. This incident, and others that will follow, represent the officers of the Vichy regime in Dakar as fascists.

Another sequence which holds significance for the type of subjectivity constructed in this film with regards to both African and European characters, is that which deals with Diatta's uncle's manoeuvre to have Diatta marry his uncle's daughter, Bintu. The importance of this sequence lies in the fact that it deals with the influence of maternal uncles in the Senegalese family structure. In addition, it also deals with the subtle ways in which uncles apply pressures upon their nephews to have their will done. The sequence begins with the arrival of Diatta's uncle at Thiaroye camp and ends with the debate between Raymond and Diatta over whether there is any differences between the Vichy regime and that of de Gaulle with respect to their colonial policies in Africa. The first scene begins with a close-up of Diatta pouring palm wine. He hands it to his uncle who pours a drink to their ancestors, takes a sip, and then passes it to Diatta. He then asks Diatta what happened to his bandaged arm. Diatta explains it away, saying that he hurt it a while ago. Next, his uncle tactfully asks him if the picture on the shelf is that of his wife and child, and he replies it is. To change the topic, the uncle tells him that they are having special festival that year because they have had a very good rice harvest. Diatta, knowing fully well that it is just a diversion from what brought him, answers that God has been good to them. His uncle then reminds him that his parents worked very hard for their village, and Diatta replies that soon he will be discharged, and that after his discharge he will return home to attend the festival. At that, the uncle asks what will happen to his family in France and Diatta tells him that he will spend a few months in Effok and then go back to complete his studies in France. His uncle asks next whether that is with a view to joining his white wife. Diatta, who all along is aware of what he is driving at, diverts the discussion by telling his uncle that now that he has mentioned her, he has reminded him of his plans to send her some coffee. He then asks him if he can help him buy ten kilograms. His uncle, who notices that he is losing the battle of wits, collects the money for the coffee from Diatta and tells him point blank that his mother

and himself have already picked a wife for him and that she is his daughter, Bintu. Knowing fully well that he cannot antagonise his uncle by refusing his demand outrightly, he pauses for a while and then reminds his uncle that he is a Catholic.

His uncle, who is unimpressed by his excuse, informs him that there are Catholics in their village, Effok, and that they go to Mass every Sunday, but most of them have two or three wives. Diatta, who feels defeated, keeps quiet after this. He gives his uncle the packet of chocolate, milk and sugar given to him by the black American military police when he came to apologise to him, to give to the children back home. But before his uncle leaves, he tells Diatta that he will give the presents to Diatta's wife, Bintu. Throughout the sequence, both of them are shot in the dialogue format of shot/reverse shot, with no special emphasis on any of them. The significance of the sequence lies in the representation of maternal uncles' authority over their nephews. To those with little knowledge of the ethics of African family relationship, this short scene might appear to be dealing with only the pressures which Diatta's uncle is applying to make him marry his cousin. It is much more complex than that. What Sembène and Sow display in this scene is the intricate and subtle manner in which sensitive issues are dealt within family circles between uncles and their nephews. The central issue, of course, is the authority of maternal uncles in the relation to their nephews. This authority is affirmed by the fact that in the scene which follows, Diatta's uncle does send Bintu to Thiaroye Camp to attend to the needs of her fiancé.

The next scene is also important in other respects. As I earlier noted, it deals with the dilemma of French liberals caught between the desire for personal friendship and the pull of altruistic nationalism which renders them blind to, and complicit in, French colonial atrocities in Africa. The scene begins with a shot of an open field with cattle grazing. Next, there is a cut to Diatta and Bintu walking toward the bottom of a cotton tree. Diatta asks her what brought her to Thiaroye Camp and she replies that she came to see him. At that point, she moves round and sits at a strategic hidden space at the bottom of the cotton tree. Realising that she is tempting him, Diatta puts on his cap

which he had been holding and walks away. She herself get up and walks away in the opposite direction. On the way, she passes Raymond who looks at her as she goes off toward screen left.

In the next cut, we see Diatta going toward the camp in screen right. When he notices footsteps behind him, he stops and waits for Captain Raymond to join him. After exchanging greetings, he gives Diatta the novel, *The Silence of the Sea*, by Vercors, which he borrowed earlier. Diatta then tells him that he has heard that he will soon be going back to France with new recruits; he requests that Raymond should help deliver some coffee to his wife in Paris and Raymond obliges his request. Next, Raymond asks about Bintu and Diatta replies that she is fine. Noticing the change in his uniform, Raymond asks why they bothered to change their uniform when they are about to be demobilised and Diatta replies that they are not French citizens but subjects. When Raymond reminds him that he can apply for French citizenship since he is educated, Diatta replies that he wants to be an educated African. Raymond then asks him if he still intends to carry on with his studies in France, and he replies he does, adding however, that he will do that as soon as he is free to go to see the ruins of his village. When Raymond asks what ruins, he tells him the story of the rice requisition expedition carried out by French soldiers into Effok which ended in the massacre of the villagers where women refused to surrender their produce. He also informs him that he lost his parents in the incident. Raymond, who is sincerely remorseful about the incident, gives his condolences to Diatta. However, on learning that it occurred in 1942, he rationalises it by remarking that it was because France was still under the Vichy regime. He consoles Diatta by telling him that time and attitude change, and also asks Diatta if he had been following the conference in Brazzaville and he replies that he has. Throughout their discussion, both of them are standing beside each other, resting on a cotton tree, and are held in a neutral, fixed camera, in a medium shot. Raymond raises the issue of the Brazzaville conference to assure Diatta that de Gaulle's regime is responsive to African

aspirations, but Diatta's ironic smile at the mention of Brazzaville indicates he thinks otherwise.

The Brazzaville conference, which was organised after the establishment of the Free French regime in Paris in 1944, initiated a lot of liberalisation in French colonial policy toward Africa, much of it having to do with the building of infrastructures, schools and hospitals, areas in which Francophone Africa lagged behind countries in Anglophone Africa at the time. During the conference de Gaulle also acknowledged formally the contribution of Africa to the liberation of France. With regards to the conference, Crowder has noted that

though for the most part Africa had been passively conscripted into support of the Free French regime in French Black Africa, de Gaulle in recognition of the contribution Africa had made to the liberation of France offered them political, social and economic reforms. Without Equatorial Africa as an initial base for his Free French, without Black African troops and the food supplied by African peasants, it is doubtful whether de Gaulle could ever have achieved his goal of the rehabilitation of the defeated France. As de Gaulle put it himself at the Brazzaville conference: France found in Africa "her refuge and the starting point for her liberation" (Crowder: 279).

The conference also adopted a resolution that the Empire should be known as the French Union, that each constituent of the Union should develop in its own way, that loyalty of individuals to the Union should be given through their own units, and that the economic policy of the colonies should be directed toward the advantages of the inhabitants. The conference however stood resolutely against any idea of independence. It has also been noted by Frederick Pedler that when de Gaulle flew into Brazzaville for the conference accompanied by the governor-general and all the governors, there was no single African on his entourage (Pedler, 1979: 50). Whatever reforms were adopted at the conference, therefore, precluded Africans from direct participation in the running of their own affairs.

The main point of disagreement between Diatta and Raymond in this scene lies in Diatta's analogy between the French colonial massacre at Effok and that of the Germans at Oradour-Sur-Glane. Raymond objects to the analogy on the ground that he does not feel that there is justification for making such comparisons. Diatta, for his part, argues

that they were both massacres by colonial armies with the same mentality. He also reminds Raymond that in 1940, French officers refused to admit West Africans to the Free French Army, that those Senegalese who enlisted were shot by the officers. The importance of Raymond's rationalisation lies in the fact that whereas he is prepared to accept what the Germans did at Oradour as a barbaric act, he does not accept the fact that what the French did in Effok in Senegal fits such description. Though the camera is neutral in the scene, Diatta's arguments carry more weight because of the force and anger underlying the delivery of his lines, in contrast to Raymond's gentle attempts at placating him, through rationalisation of the atrocities of the French colonial troops.

The major conflict, which builds up into a climax toward the end of the film when the *tirailleurs* take the General hostage and the camp is razed, occurs in the sequence dealing with the refusal by the French military authorities to pay the soldiers the correct exchange rate of 1000 French francs to 500 CFA francs. The most important development in this sequence, however, is the ethical debates between those who fought for the liberation of France like the *tirailleurs* and those troop of the Vichy regime in Senegal who initially honoured the armistice imposed on France by the Germans, claimed neutrality in the war in accordance to its terms, and refused to fight. The sequence begins with the arrival of the soldiers at the parade ground, where they were supposed to exchange their money, and ends with Labrousse summoning the camp guards to disperse them. The highlight of the sequence is the accusation by the military authorities that the soldiers stole the money which they want to exchange, an accusation which makes Diatta to deliver one of the longest and most theatrical speeches in the entire film. I should like to summarise and paraphrase this speech because it bears the bulk of the debate between those who fought and those who did not. In addition, I will respond to Labrousse's reaction to the speech.

The speech begins with Diatta telling the officers that they are insulting the soldiers who fought their battles for them, while they remained in Dakar, by accusing them that they stole the legitimate money which they earned, from their dead colleagues

in the battlefields. He reminds them that the soldiers were in the Free French First Army, that they fought from Fort Lamy, crossed the Tibesti and chased Mussolini's men in Southern Libya. He also reminds them that they were the first soldiers to enter Tripoli, and again, the first to enter Paris in August, 1944. He then asks them where they were between 1939 and 1940. He reminds them that some of the soldiers were from the Seventh French Army, that together with soldiers from France, England, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, they faced the Second Panza Division of the German Army and had to flee to Dunkirk. He further reminds them that though they were part of the allies, the men were not allowed to sail to England on their way home. He also reminds them of the case of Captain Ntchorere. According to Diatta, Captain Ntchorere was taken as a prisoner of war to the concentration camp at Buchenwald, where the Germans tried to separate him from his white colleagues. Upon his refusal to be kept separate from the white French officers, he was shot. The moral of the story is that his white colleagues refused to protest during the incident and the *tirailleurs* had to risk their lives to bury the captain in an unmarked grave.

Throughout the speech, Diatta stands between the soldiers, standing in the parade ground and the French officers sitting, and he is shot in medium close-ups and medium shots, from behind the officers. As he speaks, he occasionally turns to the soldiers, who lend their support by interjecting with encouraging commentaries. The speech is also delivered with such a force that it is almost unstoppable. For instance, when Diatta says that the soldiers were the first to enter Paris, Major Auguste gestures that it is enough but Diatta replies that he is not done. While Diatta is speaking, there is a cut to a medium close-up of Labrousse, who writes "communist" on a piece of paper and passes it round the table to the other officers. This very long speech, aspects of which I have just paraphrased, deals with the experience of racial discrimination suffered by African soldiers even in the heat of the Second World War. But most importantly, the speech is an indictment of the French soldiers of the Vichy regime, who initially refused to fight in the war because of the armistice, remained in Dakar from where they

committed all sorts of atrocities against a defenceless civilian population, the most often cited in Senegal being the massacre at Effok. The sequence also deals with the tradition of dismissing the arguments of one's opponents by calling them communists, a potent political weapon of the Cold War which African governments inherited from their colonial masters and used against their political opponents.

The pace of events in *Camp de Thiaroye* does not really pick up until the climax in the last sequence when the General's refusal to pay the *tirailleurs* the correct exchange rate for their money and their discharge entitlements, results in the soldiers taking him hostage and the camp being razed. The most significant events in this sequence are: the display of the African style of popular democracy on the question of whether they should hold the General hostage until he agrees to pay them, the display of the age-old African weakness of credulity, the outcome of which was the massacre of the *tirailleurs*, and lastly, at the level of cinematography, the studied break from the rather hazy formal style of the rest of the film, to a much more naturalistic one in the celebration scene which precedes the bombardment of the camp.

Though historical events in *Camp de Thiaroye* are presented from an African point of view, character-subjectivity and its representation is not premised on a binary manicheist tradition of the sort that one finds in colonialist African cinema, where characterisation is rigidly subjected to the classificatory attributes of the races derived from nineteenth century biological theories of race. Characters are not simply good because they are black and bad because they are white. Characterisation is approached from the level of individuality, with character attributes firmly anchored in social environment and cultural upbringing. Though in terms of the overall representation of European characters, the majority of them are portrayed as villains, their villainy is attributed to the political character of the regime which they represent. For instance, the French officer corps in the film is represented as composed of two broadly opposed camps - liberal white officers like Captain Raymond whose unexposure to the racial politics of colonial societies renders them free to explore the bonds of personal

friendship, and utterly fascist ones like Captain Labrousse, Major Auguste, the General, and their simply frightened subordinate, Lieutenant Pierre, who are not only fully steeped in the racial politics of colonial societies but also exercise their authority through the display of excessive militarism of the sort that borders on outright disregard for the humanity of their African subjects. Put simply, this category of officers consider African lives as cheap and expendable commodities.

The film also deals with the dilemma of white liberals like Captain Raymond who are sometimes rebuffed by Africans who, like Diatta's uncle, have become weary of offers of friendship from Europeans because of past betrayal of the bonds of friendship or violations of it through hostile acts - but who nevertheless face ostracisation from their own people because their liberal views are considered detrimental to racial solidarity. For instance, in the two scenes set at the Officers' Mess, Captain Raymond is not only put on the defensive over his support for the *tirailleurs*, he is also ostracised by the other officers and of course branded a communist. But if the Raymond character represents an image of white liberalism, then, its major flaw as represented in this film, is its inability to come to terms with the atrocities of French colonialism in Africa. As the debate between Diatta and Raymond shows, white liberalism is often constrained by the dictates of ethnocentrism. However, if the Raymond character represents the figure of white liberalism - as indeed I think it does - then the Captain Labrousse character represents not only its underside but also the very excess of white supremacists. He is essentially contemptuous of his African subjects whom he considers overgrown children. And most importantly, he mistakes his forcible exercise of authority for his claimed knowledge of Africans. For instance, in the sequence where the *tirailleurs* are forcibly made to surrender their smart American military uniforms for those of colonial cooks, when Lieutenant Pierre exclaims in relief to Labrousse towards the end of the exercise that he did not expect it to be carried out without a major revolt, Labrousse replies that he knew they would not, that he was in Niger, Dahomey (now republic of Benin), and the Congo, that ten years out in Africa has taught him a lot about Africans whom he

likens to overgrown children. In the scenes that follow the exercise however, the *tirailleurs* are shown to be thoroughly discontent with the exercise, having been forcibly demoted from the status of a victorious army to the lowly status of a colonial cook. In fact, the exercise is the last straw that sours the already tenuous relationship between the men and the military authorities. Furthermore, the Labrousse character lacks not only the subtle militaristic and paternalistic attitudes of a Commissioner Sanders of *Sanders of the River*, but also the shrewdness and bureaucratism of the District Officer, E.R. Chadwick, of *Daybreak in Udi*. Finally, though Vichy Dakar has provided Sembène and Sow with the opportunity to detail the characteristic mannerisms of colonial figures such as that of Captain Labrousse, colonial societies were replete with such figures, and the catalogues of colonial atrocities which abound across Africa outside the initial framework of conquest and colonisation, owe much to the militaristic excesses of such figures.

Among the African characters, Sergeant-Major Diatta is the only fully drawn character. We know for instance that he was a Law student in Paris before the outbreak of the Second World War made him suspend his studies. Though we are not told how he joined the Free French First Army, it would seem that his was a voluntary enlistment rather than forcible conscription. We do know however, that his period of enlistment was forcibly extended. From his wide knowledge of black diasporan scholarly and artistic works, the Diatta character is shown to be a Pan-Africanist to the core, an intellectual whose range of knowledge covers not only works by black writers but also French writers. Indeed, the Diatta character cuts the image of the young Sembène who voluntarily enlisted in the Free French Army and was equally well exposed to works by black diasporan authors as well as French writers even before he began his writing career.

In his personal relationships, Diatta is portrayed to be a faithful and dedicated husband and father. As his letter to his French wife shows, their relationship was one based on love and friendship, one which stood above the bigotry of race and creed. It

was above all else a private personal relationship as opposed to his public Pan-Africanist obligations. In his relationship with his maternal uncle, he is shown to be a respectful nephew who would not, however, sacrifice his personal happiness on the grounds of some quaint tradition, e.g. arranged marriage. However, even though he firmly rejects his uncle's propositions, he does not dismiss him outright; rather, he handles him tactfully but firmly without making the man lose his face. In his relationship with his men, he is shown to be a courageous leader who has earned the respect of the *tirailleurs* through selfless service. Most importantly, as the scenes of consultation about the fate of the General show, he is sensitive enough to know when to bow to public opinion. Finally, as the scenes of his outing in Dakar show, he is respectful towards his elders as well as compassionate towards disabled people.

Apart from Diatta, the next most important African character in the film is Pays. Though the cause of his disability is given as torture while he was a prisoner of war at Buchenwald, the Pays character is essentially an African archetype who either because of his or her noted drunkenness or mental instability, enjoys some modicum of license from society to say or do what he or she likes, and in return, society is expected albeit always at its own peril, to disregard the opinions of such characters. It is through this characteristic nature of the archetype that Sembène and Sow explore the theme of gullibility of Africans. For instance, in the scene where the General promises to pay the *tirailleurs* - in desperation after noticing that his officers have failed to secure his release - it is only Pays who realises that the General is lying to them in order to regain his freedom. When later he warns his colleagues of the impending bombardment of the camp, as is usual with such characters, his warnings are misinterpreted as the jabberings of a crazed fellow.

Though the single most conspicuous African character in the film is Diatta, the concept of heroism as an individual accomplishment is not linked to this single character as it would be the case in most Western texts. Rather, heroism is conceived as a collective enterprise with the mantle of leadership falling upon the person with the most

visible leadership qualities for the challenge at hand. Such a leadership mantle makes the person so recognised a leader of a collective struggle. This collective definition of heroism is also very much linked to the African tradition of defining the individual through the collective rather than the collective through the individual as is the case in Western societies. Though heroism is a collective concept in African culture, there is however room for the display and acknowledgement of individual leadership qualities which may be exhibited and collectively acclaimed by society. But such public acclaim does not necessarily bestow upon the person so acknowledged the title of heroism. Rather, what it bestows is the title of leadership. As a result the democratisation of the concept of heroism in African society, we find that in many of the scenes in the film, Diarra and Pays assume the mantle of leadership, since they have little to lose, in situations that do not call for the type of leadership that Diatta is expected to provide. For this reason, events in the film do not revolve all the time around the fortunes of a single individual like Diatta.

With regard to the social composition of colonial societies, *Camp de Thiaroye* highlights the racial division of public spaces in colonial societies between the coloniser who is European and lives in the European quarters, and the colonised who in this case is African and lives in the poor and destitute section of the city designated as "native" quarters. Thus when Diatta tries to violate the boundary of these antagonistic spaces without either the sanction of colonial authority or the benefit of being an honorary European à la alien-native of economic substance like black Americans, the weight of the law is brought to bear upon him by way of misrecognition as a black American impostor. Apart from the racial division of public spaces, the film also highlights the linguistic division which exists in colonial societies, between the coloniser and the educated/illiterate colonised, on the one hand, and between the educated "native" and the uneducated, on the other. For instance, in *Camp de Thiaroye*, while the French citizens and educated Africans such as Diatta speak French, the *tirailleurs* made up of people of different ethnic backgrounds and countries, with little education, speak pidgin

French, the lingua franca in Francophone Africa among the illiterates, just as pidgin English is the lingua franca among the illiterates in Anglophone West Africa.

No doubt the directors' choice of pidgin French as language of the illiterate *tirailleurs* is part of the response to the ongoing debates about the continuing linguistic hegemony in Africa of the inherited languages of the erstwhile colonial powers. Since Obi Wali initiated the debate on inherited European languages and African literature in the early sixties, writers and artists alike have had to respond to it in accordance with the nature of materials they are dealing with. Sembène himself is a strong advocate of the Obi Wali position that only works by African writers and artists based on indigenous languages and culture qualifies to be referred to as African literature or art. To this end, he has always used Wolof, the predominant indigenous language in Senegal, as medium of filmic expression. But since *Camp de Thiaroye* deals with a multi-national experience and the *tirailleurs* do not share a multi-national indigenous language, Sembène and Sow have had to employ the next best alternative to such a medium, which is pidgin French.

With regards to spectatorial textual positioning, since the story is told from an African point of view, the spectator is positioned textually to empathise with the African characters over the injustices committed against them by French colonial rule. In most of the scenes involving Africans and the French officers, the African position is strongly presented, with the result that the French officers look pathetic, since most of their actions are driven solely by racism. However, empathy with Africans in the film, has been highly balanced by the process of having the French characters defend and rationalise whatever atrocities they are accused of. It is a colonial situation and people like Labrousse feel that they have nothing to apologise for. Sembène and Sow's handling of foreground/background action in spatial composition is quite an accomplishment but this was almost marred by the rather slow pace of the film. As I earlier noted, the pace of the film does not really pick up until the very last sequence. The only saviour in this respect has been the many occasions for laughter provided for by comic relief.

In sum, *Camp de Thiaroye* is an historical recreation of the events that built up to the French colonial massacre on December 1, 1944, of repatriated Francophone African colonial infantrymen, who have just completed their tour of duty. Though the film was meant to portray the events leading to the actual massacre itself, its main subtext is the disputation of the view that French colonial atrocities in Africa were exclusive products of the Vichy regime. The massacre at Thiaroye Camp, Sembène and Sow seem to point out, was the handiwork of de Gaulle's regime. In this respect, both directors seem to argue that there was little difference between the colonial policies of the Vichy regime and that of de Gaulle's.

7.7. Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have examined the historical background to the emergence of historical colonial encounter films in African cinema. I have equally traced the roots of this cinematic genre in relation to the discursive traditions of colonialist African cinema/discourse as well as the larger scholarly, literary and cinematic counter-discursive practices which they have inspired. As regards the texts themselves, I have argued that most of them have been produced as a means of both historical documentation and of bringing to African spectators and the larger world cinema audience, an African version of history and of the historical events produced by the encounter between Africans and Europeans, beginning from the era of slave trade, through colonial conquest, colonialism, and the struggles for independence. I have also argued that because these events are represented from an African perspective, they invariably carry a colonialist counter-discursive tone.

Of the two films which I have studied in this chapter, *Sarraounia* deals with the era of colonial conquest while *Camp de Thiaroye* deals with the era of colonial rule. *Sarraounia* explores the theme of colonial conquest and resistance, with specific reference to the resistance by the Azna warrior-queen, Sarraounia, to French colonial force. Since the film is set in the era of colonial conquest when European cultural

influence had not been established, African religio-cultural practices have been highlighted and textually foregrounded as a means of cultural authentication. The film, like Sembène's *Ceddo*, treats Islam as a foreign religious and cultural practice promoted by traditional African rulers, after their conversion by Arab traders and scholars, at the expense of traditional African religio-cultural practices. With regards to the historical context of colonial conquest, the film also explores the nature of the socio-political atmosphere - e.g. that of inter-ethnic struggle for power - within which European colonial conquest took place. I have further argued that even though various forms of spatio-temporal articulations have been exploited to confer narrative authority upon Sarraounia, her heroic image emerges not so much because of discriminating choices made in the spatio-temporal constitution of her subjectivity but because of the quality and tone of verbal discourse and physical actions - i.e. from the strength and conviction of her exhortation speeches and her war tactics. Her nationalistic speeches which are richly couched in the imagery and rhetoric of traditional African public discourse not only helps to historicise the text by placing it within the framework of the epic genre, and in a pre-colonial African environment, but also authenticate African cultural practices. I have equally argued with respect to the constitution of European characters that the film has been generally faithful in terms of its representation of the historical accounts of the atrocities committed by the Voulet-Chanoine force. With regards to Captain Voulet himself, I have argued that his characterisation as a murderous and indisciplined officer emerges not through forms of spatial distortion of his image or character make-up meant to reflect his deviousness or even spatial distancing of the spectator from his character but through his derogatory speeches about Africans and his casual summary executions of both his soldiers and prisoners of war which shows that he has no regard whatsoever for African lives.

With respect to *Camp de Thiaroye*, I have argued that though the film is meant to be an historical documentation of the events leading to the massacre at Thiaroye Camp on 1 December, 1944, its main subtext is the disputation of the view that French

colonial atrocities in Africa were exclusive products of the Vichy regime. The massacre at Thiaroye Camp, and so many others which Sembène cites as inspiration for making the film, were carried out under General de Gaulle's regime. I have equally argued that, though events in the film are articulated through the personal experiences of Sergeant-major Diatta and Private Pays, and as such both characters are granted comparatively more narrative authority, in relation to other characters in the film, either through spatial accessibility or character narration as in the case of Pays's subjective flashback, nonetheless, the overall sense of tragedy transcends the personal experiences of these two characters. Furthermore, the overall development of character and narrative viewpoint emerge not so much through the application of discriminatory spatio-temporal articulation in respect of both African and European characters but through the quality and tone of verbal discourse and narrative actions. By this I do not mean to infer that character development is not spatio-temporally articulated in both films. Indeed they are, and in certain instances they have been used to foreground the narrative voice of African characters. However, the overall narrative viewpoint of these films does not emerge through the choices made in respect of forms of spatio-temporal narrations applied in the representation of characters but through the quality and content of verbal speech and narrative actions. Of course all verbal discourses and narrative actions are spatio-temporally articulated but they are not discriminatorily articulated in respect of African and European characters. In Western narrative practice for instance, verbal discourse is subordinated to the spatio-temporal orders of the film, and in the case of colonialist African cinema, it constitutes African subjectivity and space as objects of specular ethnographic interest and pleasure. This is not the case in both films. As a result of the spatio-temporal generosity underlining African cinematic practices, the themes of colonial atrocities and resistance which are treated in the films, emerge, more from the quality and content of verbal speech and narrative actions than through forms of spatio-temporal articulations. In my concluding chapter, I shall attempt a comparative analysis

of the nature of spatio-temporal articulations in the cinematic practices which I have studied.

CHAPTER EIGHT.

CONCLUSION.

This study has been concerned with providing a proper definition and theoretical framework for the criticism of colonial and post-colonial African cinema. The main thrust of the study has been to examine the nature of colonial and post-colonial African cinema, with emphasis on how the cinematic practices of the colonial period and post-colonial texts situated in that era, have constructed African subjectivity and culture, in contrast to European subjectivity and culture, during the colonial period. I have approached the study by examining the nature of each cinematic practice, the historical background of its emergence, and its generic forms and modes of representation as exemplified in the film texts.

With respect to the colonial period, I have argued that two divergent cinematic practices existed during this era, namely colonial African instructional cinema and colonialist African cinema. The former was sponsored by governments and non-governmental agencies while the latter was driven by purely commercial interests. I have traced the roots of colonial African instructional cinema to the Bantu Educational Cinema Experiment and argued that this project, with its emphasis on using the cinema as a medium for instruction, social mobilisation and community development, inspired other cinematic practices such as those of the Colonial Film Unit (CFU) of the British colonial government, the Film and Photo Bureau and Centre for Catholic Action Cinema (CCAC) of the Belgian Congo. With regards to the construction of African subjectivity and culture, I have argued that this cinematic practice, in contrast to colonialist African cinema, represents Africans as knowing and knowledgeable people, able and eager to learn modern methods of social planning and development for the benefit of their communities. I have also argued that these films do not represent Africans as lacking their own forms of government, education, agriculture, health care, building construction, etc, but rather represent them as doing these things in the old and

ineffectual traditional ways, and that once it is proven to them that modern methods of doing things are more effectual, they eagerly try to adapt to change by learning to master these modern methods.

As a result of the emphasis on the use of the cinema as a medium of instruction, most of the films are oriented towards assisting Africans to master these modern methods. With respect to the textual positioning of Africans, these films situate Africans at the centre of narrative action as subjects in narration, as opposed to their positioning in colonialist African cinema as objects in narration or spectacle, and that space and time are defined in these films by their presence and actions. Consequently, it is their struggle for the modernisation of their communities that is celebrated in films such as *Men of Africa* (Alexander Shaw, 1939) and *Daybreak in Udi* (Terry Bishop, 1949). Though the films also represent British institutions and agencies assisting in the process of modernisation, it is not the actions of British officials that are foregrounded in them, rather, it is those of Africans that are celebrated as an instance of the British contribution to colonial development. The irony underlying the whole colonial enterprise is that while colonial African instructional cinema is celebrating the process of modernisation going on in Africa, colonialist African cinema preoccupies itself with the representation of Africa as one huge jungle inhabited by savage and bestial people who have just been 'pacified' but are constantly on the throes of relapse into barbarism in the slightest absence of colonial authority.

With regard to colonialist African cinema, I have argued that the roots of the cinematic practice can be traced contextually to the uneven knowledge and power relations underlying Afro-European relationship as a result of European colonial authority and the superiority complex which it has produced in the European imagination, as the more powerful partner in the relationship. Colonialist African cinema is a product of this uneven knowledge and power relations, and of course, of the intertextual authority of the colonialist canon which, as I have argued in my literature review, stretches as far back as the classical era. With respect to the modern era,

colonialist African literature, especially travel literature, the adventure novel, memoirs of colonial administrators and missionaries, autobiographies, etc., furnished the materials for filmic representation. The main idea which inform these literary texts and the films adapted from them, is that of European racial superiority as propounded in nineteenth century racial theories. Though this idea has been in existence since the classical era, with respect to the representation of Africans, it was codified and scientifically justified through nineteenth century racial theories

With respect to the representation of African subjectivity and culture, the colonialist genre is organised around a comparatist schema which, working from physical outlook, through institutions of governments, to cultural and religious practices, etc., sets up Africans and their institutional and cultural practices as inferior in comparison to those of Europeans. Though these films occasionally acknowledge the underlying uneven knowledge and power relations between Africans and Europeans, through physical display of militarism as in the case of the sequence dealing with the meeting between District Commissioner Sanders and King Mofalaba in *Sanders of the River*, in most cases, the regime of authority of the genre is masked and naturalised so that the basis for European presence on the continent, and for the comparative narrative schema, is made to look as the natural order of things.

The genre employs various metaphors of savagery and bestiality meant to draw associations between Africans and animals or between their behaviour and those of animals. Instances of such representations can be found in the pit prison sequence in *Tarzan the Ape Man* where shots of the physical outlook of the giant ape in the pit and its act of strangling its victims, are intercut with those of ecstatic pygmies dancing amidst drumbeats on the stand overlooking the pit. Another example of such a metaphoric representation can be found in *Sanders of the River* where an analogy is drawn between Africans and various animals celebrating the absence of law and order from the district in the sequence dealing with Sanders' departure on leave, where for instance, a shot of a man climbing a coconut tree with bare hands and movements

resembling that of a bat crawling up a tree trunk, is intercut with shots of men passing the message of Sanders' absence through drumbeats, to scenes of resumption of slave raids, and of elephants, hippopotami, giraffs, etc., lumbering in and out of water as if in joyful celebration of this absence. Thus the sequences dealing with Sanders' absence from the district are carefully ordered to signify this shared degeneration into a state of savagery. The metaphors of savagery and bestiality also take the form of the mindless and unexplained murders of Europeans and their African collaborators as in the representation of the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya, in films such as *Simba* and *The Kitchen Toto*, or it may take the form of a revenge on an innocent child, France, by Protée in *Chocolat*. In these instances, the idea is to draw sympathy for Europeans who are presented as victims of African barbarism.

In the colonialist genre, the only good African is one who collaborates with European colonial authority while the African villain is one who opposes, in whatever guise, this authority. European villainy or social degeneration, the phenomenon of Europeans going "native", represented in form of sympathy for or fraternisation with Africans through marriage or friendship, is linked to Europeans of working class background.

In terms of spatio-temporal articulations, space and time are defined in the genre by the presence and actions of European characters, with Africans functioning as the background of actions. Consequently, European characters are positioned in these films as subjects in/of narration while Africans are positioned as objects of spectacle or objects in/of narration. Deviations from this framework are linked either to the comparative schema or to omniscient narration, in which instance, a certain amount of neutrality is established. There is however a tendency in the genre towards regular subjectivisation of space and time by anchoring narration through character point-of-view, flashbacks, reflections, etc., as a result of the linkage between space and time, and the relays of looks, gazes, and spectacles, to European characters. This is why the geographic space of Africa and Africans and their cultural practices function in these

films as objects of ethnographic interest and spectacle. The subjectivisation of space is stretched to the limits in *Chocolat*, for instance, where the main story is anchored through France's flashback, and in this sense, the film can be read as an allegory of French imperialism in Africa. Adult France's return to post-colonial Cameroun and all her memory recalls can be considered as the allegorical return of France to the country, to claim credit for whatever infrastructural development or modernisation there are in her erstwhile colony, as product of France's colonial beneficence. In fact, the representation of modern infrastructural development in post-colonial Cameroun such as roads and airport, is linked through the narrative emphasis on road construction and airfield, in France's flashback, as products of this colonial heritage. At the bottom line, the film seems to suggest that without French colonialism, Cameroun would not have developed its modern infrastructures. This is also the basic thought projected in the whole genre.

The colonialist genre never deviates from the projection of its central idea of European racial superiority. It may be projected in subtle forms through the framework of institutional, cultural and religious comparative schema; it may even incorporate Africans as tamed and controllable subjects, as in the case of Umbopa in *King Solomon's Mines* and Bosambo in *Sanders of the River*, as an acceptable face of the African, but it does not pretend that the highest acceptable African type is equal to the unacceptable European type. Intelligence, the ability to plan, organise and execute - whether the goal is adventure as in *Tarzan the Ape Man* and *King Solomon's Mines* or the conception and execution of a road project, as in *Mister Johnson* - are represented as biological and hereditary qualities and linked to the idea of race. Since the genre projects Europeans as naturally endowed with these qualities on account of their racial superiority and Africans as lacking them on account of their racial inferiority, the genre, in whatever sub-generic guise it takes, perpetuates the devaluation of African humanity. In this regard, it differs in no small measures from colonial African instructional cinema. It is for these reasons that I have argued that of the two cinematic practices of the colonial period or of post-colonial European texts set in the era, it is the colonialist genre, rather than the colonial

instructional genre, that motivated the institution of the tradition of colonialist counter-discourse in post-colonial African cinema.

With respect to the post-colonial period, I have approached its study by examining the scope and limitations of works already done in the field as well as proposing a theoretical framework, intended to fill the gap in existing works, for the criticism of African cinema. I have equally examined both colonial and post-colonial film production structures and sponsorship policies in anglophone and francophone African countries with an emphasis on how colonial production structures and sponsorship policies have affected those of the post-colonial era as well as how those of post-colonial period have affected the output and quality of films.

With regard to post-colonial African historical texts situated in the colonial period, though the colonialist counter-discourse genre in African cinema, responds to the whole colonial enterprise, it was motivated, first and foremost, by the desire to refute the images of Africa and Africans identifiable with the discursive tradition of the colonialist genre. The spatio-temporal orders of the colonialist counter-discursive genre are not individualised and racialised as in the colonialist genre; space and time are democratised in relation to the representation of both African and European characters. It is not race that determines how space and time are articulated, and how narrative authority is granted to characters or even spectatorial accessibility granted or denied, but the position of each character in the text, the nature of events represented and the contingencies of plot.

In *Sarraounia*, for instance, Captain Voulet and his camp are granted as much narrative authority, both in terms of the detailed psychological study of characters and of spectatorial accessibility, as Sarraounia and members of her camp. What grants Sarraounia overall narrative authority in the film is the fact that it is her story that is being told, her resistance to French colonialism is what is being celebrated, and so, the dictates of plot management demand that enough space and time be devoted to her background, to explain how she came to acquire her reputation as a sorceress and

warrior-queen so that her rise to fame does not seem contrived and unbelievable. On the other hand, Captain Voulet's villainy is not attributed to biological or natural causes, rather, it is treated as a product of French colonisation wars and an overriding personal desire for fame and glory. There is no spectatorial distancing from the Voulet character. He is given detailed psychological study, and sometimes, there is even an overt attempt to make the spectator empathise with him, as his regretful moments of personal reflection during the withdrawal sequence can attest. What establishes Voulet's villainy in the film is the detailed recounting of historically documented atrocities of the force which he commanded and encouraged, not invented stories. Also, in *Sarraounia*, we are made aware of the fact that the French colonial authorities did not sanction the atrocities of the Voulet force. The attempts made by the French colonial authorities to replace him as the commander of the expedition force, are represented.

In *Camp de Thiaroye* also, the arguments of the French commanders and administrators, are given detailed attention. French characters are granted as much narrative authority, through detailed study of characters' psychologies and spectatorial accessibility, as their African counterparts. If the African characters in the film appear to attract more sympathy, then, it is because the film details the historically documented atrocities committed against the force during the Second World War. In addition, the villainy of the French officers is not attributed to biological or natural causes nor is it extended indiscriminately to all French officers in the film, as Africans are often represented in the colonialist genre. In *Camp de Thiaroye*, Captain Raymond is not represented as a racist like the other French officers of the Vichy regime in Dakar.

In the colonialist counter-discourse genre therefore, the desire to document for posterity European colonial atrocities against Africans is not used as an excuse to give an unbalanced accounts of historical events. Though history is not accurately represented with respect to the actual details of historical events - the films do not in any case pretend to be aspiring to the truth and objectivity required of history as a discipline - they nevertheless do not contradict, in broad terms, the historical accounts from which

they draw inspiration. The genre celebrates African religious and cultural belief-systems but it does not set them up within a comparative framework with those of Europeans, nor does it uncritically celebrate them. It does project good aspects of African culture such as respect for old age and the elderly, the simplicity and warmth of traditional African society, the care and protection of the extended family system, the hospitality of traditional African society, etc., as valuable aspects of the African heritage, but it does not disregard the need for a balanced plot and story. In this respect, the history represented in the genre is very much a contested history.

From my study of the cinematic practices of the colonial period, and of post-colonial texts situated in the era, there is every reason to believe that the period will continue to generate a lot of disputations and works articulating arguments from both sides of the colonial divide. Many European directors will continue to hold steadfast to the colonialist view of Africa and Africans, especially if it makes them feel better about themselves to do so. Africans do not at present possess the means of effectively challenging such views reel for reel or satellite broadcasting for satellite broadcasting but at least we can take solace in the fact that like the nineteenth century racial theories which precedes their practice, there will always be an alternative European voice, and an alternative to colonialist African cinema with a different image of Africans to hold on to. It may not necessarily take the form of a latter day version of instructional African cinema or of a Richard Attenborough's *Cry Freedom* (1988), but when one takes cognisance of the fact that people like Basil Davidson and Ulli Beier, among many others, have at one time or the other written effectively about Africa and Africans, without romanticising them or adopting the condescending tone of an outright fascist or a paternalistic superior, one can at least stay rest assured that there will always be an alternative European reel on Africa.

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APPENDIX I.

Filmography.

This filmography covers only the films cited in this study.

Adu, Jab (1977) - *Bisi Daughter of the River* (feature).

Akin, Lamine (1966) - *Le Sergeant Bakary Woulen* (documentary).

(1966) - *Mary Narken* (documentary).

(1966) - *Dan la vie des peuples, il a des instant* (documentary).

Alassane, Moustapha (1962) - *La bague du Roi Koda* (short).

(1966) - *Le retour de L'aventurier* (documentary).

(1982) - *Kankamba* (feature)

Ampaw, King (1972) - *They Call It Love* (feature).

(1983) - *Kukurantumi* (feature).

(1986) - *Juju / Nana Akoto* (feature).

Ansah, Kwaw (1980) - *Love Brewed in the African Pot* (feature).

(1988) - *Heritage ... Africa* (feature).

Apted, Michael (1988) - *Gorillas in the Mist: The Story of Dian Fossey* (feature).

Aryetey, Sam (1968) - *No Tears for Ananse* (feature).

Aw, Tidiane (1974) - *Le bracelet de bronze* (feature).

Balogun, Ola (1969) - *One Nigeria* (documentary).

(1971) - *Les Ponts de Paris* (The Bridges of Paris) (documentary).

(1971) - *Fire in the Afternoon* (documentary).

(1972) - *Alpha* (feature).

(1972) - *Thundergod* (documentary).

(1972) - *Nupe Masquerade* (documentary).

(1972) - *In the Beginning* (documentary).

(1973) - *Owuama* (documentary).

(1973) - *Eastern Nigeria Revisited* (documentary).

(1974) - *Vivre* (To Live) (documentary).

(1975) - *Amadi* (feature).

(1975) - *Nigersteel* (documentary).

(1976) - *Ajani Ogun* (feature).

(1977) - *Musik-Man* (feature).

(1978) - *Black Goddess / A deusa negra* (feature).

(1979) - *Fight for Freedom* (Ija Ominira) (documentary).

(1980) - *Aiye* (feature).

(1981) - *Cry Freedom* (feature).

(1982) - *Orun Mooru* (feature).

(1984) - *Money Power* (Owo L'Agba) (feature).

Bassori, Timité (1963) - *Les Forestiers* (The Foresters) (documentary).

(1963) - *L'Abidjan-Niger* (documentary).

(1963) - *Amédée Pierre* (documentary).

(1964) - *Sur la dune de la solitude* (On the Dune of Solitude) (feature).

(1968) - *La Femme au Couteau* (The Woman with a Knife) (feature).

(1971) - *Abidjan, perle des lagune* (Abidjan, the Lagoon Pearl) (documentary).

(1971) - *Bondoukou, an II* (Bondoukou, year II) (documentary).

(1972) - *Ondienne, au 12* (Ondienne, year 12) (documentary).

(1972) - *Koussou 1* (documentary).

(1974) - *Koussou 2* (documentary).

(1974) - *Les Compagnos d'Akati* (The Akati Fellows) (documentary).

Bathily, Moussa (1978) - *Tiyabu biru* (The Circumcision) (documentary).

(1981) - *Le certificat d'indigence* (documentary).

Beresford, Bruce (1990) - *Mister Johnson* (feature).

Biri, Fernando (1958) - *Tire die* (Throw Me A Dime) (feature).

Bishop, Terry (1949) - *Daybreak in Udi* (dramatised documentary).

Camara, Dan Soko (1983) - *Ouloukoro* (musical).

Camara, Moussa (1968) - *Ame Perdu* (documentary).

(1972) - *Un amour radical* (documentary).

(1973) - *Un grand père dans le Vent* (documentary).

Cissé, Souleymane (1965) - *L'Homme et les idoles* (Man and Idols) (shorts).

(1966) - *Sources d'inspiration* (Sources of Inspiration) (short).

(1968) - *L'Aspirant* (The Aspirant) (short).

(1970) - *Degal à Dialloubé* (Degal at Dialloubé) (documentary).

(1971) - *Fête du Sanke* (documentary).

(1972) - *Cinq jours d'une vie* (Five Days in a Life) (short).

(1973) - *Dixième anniversaire de l'OUA* (Tenth Anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity) (documentary).

(1974) - *Den Muso* (feature).

(1978) - *Baara* (feature).

(1982) - *Finyé* (The Wind) (feature).

de Baroncelli, Jacques (1939) - *L'Homme du Niger* (feature).

Denis, Claire (1988) - *Chocolat* (feature).

Diagne, Costa (1967) - *Peau Noire* (documentary).

(1967) - *Huit et vingt* (documentary).

(1968) - *Hier, aujourd' hui demain* (documentary).

Dia-Moukori, Urbain (1965) - *Point de vue I* (feature).

Diakité, Moussa Kemoko (1969) - *Riz-culture dans le bogate* (documentary).
(1975) - *L'université la campagne* (documentary).

Dickson, Thorold (1946) - *Men of Two Worlds* (feature).

Diop, Moustafa (1983) - *Le medicine de Gafire* (documentary).

Dore, Maurice (1974) - *Boram Xam Xam* (documentary).

dos Santos, Nelson Pereira (1963) - *Vidas Secas* (Barren Lives) (features).

Duparc, Henry (1968) - *Recolte du coton I* (Growing Cotton) (documentary).
(1968) - *Recolte du coton II* (Growing Cotton, Part II) (documentary).
(1968) - *Achetez ivoirien* (Buy Ivorian Products) (documentary).
(1968) - *Tam tam ivoirien* (Ivorian Drum) (documentary).
(1969) - *Profil ivoirien* (documentary).
(1969) - *Mouna ou le rêve d'un artiste* (Mouna, Or An Artiste's Dream) (feature).
(1969-70) - *Carnet de Voyage* (documentary).
(1970) - *J'ai dix ans* (I am Ten Years Old) (documentary).
(1972) - *Abusan* (feature).
(1977) - *L'Herbe sauvage* (Weeds) (feature).

Ecaré, Désirée (1967) - *Concerto pour exile* (Concerto for an Exile) (feature).
(1970) - *A nous deux, France* (For Us Both, France) (feature).
(1985) - *Visages de femme* (Faces of Women) (feature).

Ford, John (1953) - *Mogambo* (feature).

Gamba, Sao (1987) - *Kolormask* (feature).

Ganda, Oumarou (1968) - *Cabascabo* (short).
(1970) - *Le Wazzou polygame* (The Polygamist Morale) (short).
(1973) - *Saitane* (Satan) (feature).
(1980) - *L'Exilé* (The Exile) (feature).

Hale, Gordon (1940) - *Mr English at Home* (documentary).

Halilu, Adamu (1955) - *It Pays To Care* (documentary).
(1958) - *Hausa Village* (documentary).
(1959) - *Northern Horizon* (documentary).
(1960) - *Durbar Day* (documentary).
(1960) - *Giant in the Sun* (documentary).
(1963) - *Rinderpest* (documentary).

- (1965) - *Welcome Change* (documentary).
- (1967) - *Tourist Delight* (documentary).
- (1967) - *Back To Land* (documentary).
- (1974) - *Pride of a Nation* (documentary).
- (1977) - *Shehu Umar* (feature).
- (1977) - *Black Heritage* (documentary).
- (1978) - *Kanta of Kebbi* (feature).
- (1981) - *Moment of Truth* (feature).
- (1982) - *Zainab* (feature).

- Hondo, Med (1969) - *Partout ou Peut-être nulle part* (Everywhere, Or Maybe Nowhere) (short).
- (1969) - *Balade aux sources* (Ballade to the Sources) (short).
 - (1969) - *Soleil O* (O Sun) (feature).
 - (1973) - *Les Bicots-nègre, vos voisins* (Arabs and Niggers, Your Neighbours) (feature).
 - (1977) - *Nous aurons toute la mort pour dormir* (We'll Have all the Time We're Dead to Sleep) (documentary).
 - (1979) - *Polisario, un peuple en armes* (Polisario, A People in Arms) (documentary).
 - (1979) - *West Indies* (feature).
 - (1986) - *Sarraounia* (feature).

- Hook, Harry (1987) - *The Kitchen Toto* (feature).

- Hudson, Hugh (1984) - *Greystoke* (feature).

- Hurst, Brian Desmond (1955) - *Simba* (feature).

- Huston, John (1951) - *The African Queen* (feature).

- Kabore, Gaston (1978) - *Stockez et Conserve les grains* (Stock and Keep Grains) (documentary).
- (1979) - *Regard sur le VIème FESPACO* (A Look at the Sixth FESPACO) (documentary).
 - (1980) - *Utilisation des énergies en milieu rural* (The Use of New Energies in Rural Environment) (documentary).
 - (1982) - *Wend Kunni, le don de Dieu* (Wend Kunni, the Gift of God) (feature).

- Kamwa, Daniel (1975) - *Boubou-Cravate* (Cross-Breed) (short).
- (1975) - *Pousse-Pousse* (Trycycle Man) (feature).
 - (1978) - *La Ligne de coeur* (Line of the Heart) (documentary).
 - (1979) - *Akum* (short).
 - (1979) - *Novotel* (short).
 - (1979) - *Danse automate, danse* (Dance, Automaton, Dance) (short).
 - (1980) - *Messe à Melen* (Mass at Melen) (documentary).
 - (1980) - *Notre fille* (Our Daughter) (feature).

- (1981) - *Cam-Air, dix ans d'essor* (Cameroon Airline, A Decade of Flight) (documentary).
- (1982) - *Nous les fous du volant* (Such Crazy Driving) (documentary).
- (1983) - *Les Fleurs du terroir* (Flowers of the Soil) (documentary).

Keita, George (1964) - *Karogo* (feature).

Kola, Djim Mamadou (1972) - *Le sang des parias* (feature).

Kollo, Sanou (1979) - *Beglo Naba* (feature).

(1980) - *Dodos* (feature).

(1981) - *Paweogo* (feature).

Korda, Zoltan (1935) - *Sanders of the River* (feature).

M'bala, Gnoan (1971) - *La biche* (feature).

(1972) - *Amenie* (feature).

(1974) - *Vasily* (feature).

(1976) - *Le Chapeau* (feature).

(1983) - *Ablakon* (feature).

Mungai, Ann (1992) - *Saikati* (feature).

Nee-Owo, Kwate (1971) - *You Hide Me* (feature).

(1974) - *Struggle for Zimbabwe* (documentary).

(1976) - *Angela Davis* (documentary).

Notcutt, L.A. and Latham G. C. (1935) - *Post Office Saving Bank* (dramatised documentary).

(1935) - *Tanga Travel* (documentary).

(1935) - *Tax* (documentary).

(1935) - *The Chief* (documentary).

(1935) - *The Hare and the Leopard* (feature).

(1935) - *Food and Health* (documentary).

(1936) - *Hookworm* (documentary).

(1936) - *Uganda Boys Scouts* (documentary).

(1936) - *Infant Malaria* (documentary).

Ouedraogo, Idrissa (1978) - *Yikyan* (feature).

Patel, Sharad (1980) - *Rise and Fall of Amin Dada* (feature).

Pearson, George (1941) - *This is an Anti-Aircraft Gun* (documentary).

(1941) - *This is a Barrage Balloon* (documentary).

(1942) - *Comfort from Uganda* (documentary).

(1943) - *Pilot-Officer Peter Thomas, RAF* (documentary).

(1943) - *Katsina Tank* (documentary).

(1944) - *Food from Oil Nuts* (documentary).

- (1944) - *We Want Rubber* (documentary).
 (1944) - *A British Family in Peace and War* (documentary).

Pollack, Sydney (1985) - *Out of Africa* (feature).

- Ricci, Sergi (1961) - *Fiere volta de nos aieux* (documentary).
 (1961) - *Espoire d'un nation* (documentary).
 (1962) - *Operation arachide* (documentary).
 (1964) - *Culture ateleee et fertilisation* (documentary).
 (1964) - *Les grands marigots magents les yeux* (documentary).
 (1966) - *Comment mourrir mon enfants* (documentary).

Rocha, Glauber (1968) - *Antonio das Mortes* (The Dragon of Evil Against the Warrior Saint) (feature).

- Sembène, Ousmane (1963) - *L'Empire Sonhrai* (documentary).
 (1963) - *Borom Saret* (feature).
 (1964) - *Niaye* (feature).
 (1964) - *La Noire de* (Black Girl) (feature).
 (1968) - *Mandabi* (feature).
 (1970) - *Taw* (short).
 (1972) - *Emitai* (feature).
 (1974) - *Xala* (feature).
 (1977) - *Ceddo* (feature).
 (1988) - *Camp de Thiaroye* (with Thierno Faty Sow) (feature).
 (1992) - *Guelwaar* (feature).

Senghor, Blaise (1962) - *Grand magal a Touba* (documentary).

- Shah, Ramesh (1968) - *Mlevi* (feature).
 (1969) - *Mzembo* (feature).

Shaw, Alexander (1939) - *Men of Africa* (documentary).

Solanas, Fernando and Getino, Octavio (1968) - *La hora de los hornos* (The Hour of the Furnaces) (feature).

- Snazelle, Lionel (1947) - *Toward True Democracy* (documentary).
 (1947) - *Good Business* (documentary).
 (1948) - *Village Development* (documentary).
 (1948) - *Better Homes* (documentary).
 (1948) - *Mixed Farming* (documentary).

Stevenson, Robert (1937) - *King Solomon's Mines* (feature).

Soyinka, Wole (1984) - *Blues for the Prodigal* (feature).

Sow, Thierno (1974) - *L'option* (feature).

(1988) - *Camp de Thiaroye* (with Sembène Ousmane) (feature).

Thiam, Momar (1974) - *Baks* (feature).

Tiendrebeogo, Hilaire (1973) - *Histoire de la tuberculose* (documentary).

Traoré, Mahama Johnson (1969) - *Diankh-abi* (The Young Woman) (short).

(1969) - *L'Efer des innocents* (Hell of the Innocent) (short).

(1970) - *Diegue-bi* (The Young Woman) (feature).

(1972) - *Lambaaye* (Graft) (feature).

(1972) - *Réouh-Takh* (Big City) (feature).

(1974) - *Garga M'Bossé* (Cactus) (feature).

(1975) - *Njangaan* (The Koranic Student) (feature).

Ugbomah, Eddy (1977) - *The Rise and Fall of Dr Oyemusi* (feature).

(1979) - *The Mask* (feature).

(1980) - *Oil Doom* (feature).

(1982) - *The Boy is Good* (feature).

(1982) - *Vengeance of the Cult* (feature).

(1982) - *Bulos 80* (feature).

(1983) - *The Death of a Black President* (feature).

Vieyra, Paulin S. (1961) - *Une nation est née* (documentary).

(1962) - *Voyage présidentiel en URSS* (documentary).

(1963) - *Lamb* (documentary).

Zoumbara, Paul (1983) - *Les Jours de tourments* (feature).

Addendum.

I have chosen to exclude colonial and post-colonial ethnographic films from this study due to lack of space, but also because I believe that ethnographic films deserve a detailed study as a field in its own right. However, if I were to include them in this study, they would have been categorised under colonialist African films because most ethnographic films employ the same colonialist regime of representation in their study of Africa and Africans. Most of the contributors to a conference held at the University of Manchester in 1990 as part of the Royal Anthropological Institute's Second International Festival of Ethnographic Film, arrived at the conclusion that most ethnographic films of the African experience are colonialist in outlook. The only exception in this regard are the works of Jean Rouch whose ethnographic filmic studies entail living among the people in order to understand their cultures, and representing them sympathetically as autonomous cultures (Timothy Asch, 1992: 196-204). Keyan G. Tomaselli, in his study of the ethnographic filmic representations of the San of Namibia, arrived at the conclusion that were products of racist discourse (Tomaselli, 1992: 205-221).

Also, this study does not cover South Africa for two reasons: first, it is an example of a country where the dogma of racial theories has been taken to extremes and institutionalised into an apartheid regime which for many years deprived Black South Africans of their social rights and human dignity. The South African situation is therefore a classic example of where the dogmatism of racial theories can lead a country. Second, the country needs the sort of introductory historical study that will draw the link between the coming to power of the National Party in 1948 and the institutionalisation of apartheid, to the forms of representation in South African cinema. Such a study could explain the nature of the South African cinema in pre-apartheid South Africa, and the transformations which resulted from the institutionalisation of racism by the apartheid regime. Keyan G. Tomaselli's book, *The Cinema of Apartheid*, deals principally with the period of the apartheid regime. There is the need to bridge the

three historical eras of pre-apartheid, apartheid, and post-apartheid South African cinema. The range of such a study lies outside the scope of this work.